The Henry M. Jackson Memorial Lecture

Ben Wattenberg

Values Matter Most: Issues of the Contemporary American Political Scene

Presented by
The
Henry M. Jackson Foundation

University of Washington
Seattle, Washington

May 29, 1996

The Henry M. Jackson Foundation was established in 1983 following the death of its namesake. A non-profit, charitable organization, the Foundation supports educational programs related to fields in which Senator Jackson played a major leadership role. These include international affairs; public service; the environment and natural resources; and human rights.
The Henry M. Jackson Foundation is grateful to the Seattle Post-Intelligencer for its co-sponsorship of the Henry M. Jackson Memorial Lecture.

The Henry M. Jackson Memorial Lectures are presented periodically by the Henry M. Jackson Foundation to advance public discussion of important national and international concerns. The purpose of the Jackson Memorial Lectureship is to provide a significant forum in which major issues of public policy may be forthrightly addressed and critically examined. Views expressed in the lecture series are those of the speakers.
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Ben Wattenberg is a Senior Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C., and a noted political analyst and author. He writes a weekly newspaper column that is syndicated nationwide and is the host of the weekly public television program, "Think Tank."

Mr. Wattenberg was an aide and speech writer to President Lyndon B. Johnson and campaign advisor to Senators Henry M. Jackson and Hubert H. Humphrey. His numerous presidential appointments include membership on the American delegation to the Madrid Conference on Human Rights and on the Board of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty.

In 1972 and 1976, Mr. Wattenberg served on the committee that drafted the Democratic National Platform. Mr. Wattenberg is the author of six books; his latest, Values Matter Most, has received national critical acclaim.
WELCOME

Mr. John Joly

Good evening, I'm John Joly, Director of Public Relations for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, which is co-sponsoring tonight’s event. It is my pleasure to welcome you all to what I am sure will be an engaging and informative evening. Over the past several years, the Post-Intelligencer and the Jackson Foundation have collaborated to present the Henry M. Jackson Memorial Lectures, which are presented periodically in the interest of advancing public discussion of important national and international issues. We look forward to continuing to offer this important forum to the Seattle community.

At this time I have the honor of introducing Mrs. Helen Jackson, the Chairman of the Board of the Henry M. Jackson Foundation. Mrs. Jackson is a native of Albuquerque, New Mexico, but she has long made Everett, Washington, her home. She received her undergraduate degree from Scripps College and her Master’s degree from Columbia University. While serving on the Senate staff of Clinton Anderson of New Mexico, she met and later married Senator Henry M. Jackson. Their two children, Peter and Anna Marie, are members of the Board of Governors of the Henry M. Jackson Foundation.

Helen is a very active member of our community. She has served on the board of Everett’s General Hospital Foundation and as a trustee for the General Hospital Medical Center. In Seattle, she has served on the boards of the Pacific Northwest Ballet, the Museum of Flight, and the Washington World Affairs Fellows. In recognition of her work to establish the Henry M. Jackson Foundation, Helen received the World Citizen Award presented by the Seattle World Affairs Council. Helen serves as Chairman of the Jackson Foundation, which makes grants to support work in fields of interest to which her husband devoted his life. These are public service; the environment and natural resources; human rights; and international affairs, which includes enhancing the national leadership role of the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies here at the University of Washington.

Please join me in extending a warm welcome to Helen Hardin Jackson.

Mr. John Joly is Director of Public Relations at the Seattle Post-Intelligencer.
INTRODUCTION

Helen Hardin Jackson

Thank you, Mr. Joly, for that kind introduction. On behalf of the Jackson Foundation, it is my pleasure to welcome all of you this evening to the Henry M. Jackson Memorial Lecture. This year, we are fortunate to have Mr. Ben Wattenberg with us to deliver what is the seventh in a series of distinguished lectures.

Mr. Wattenberg has long been, and continues to be, an influential, incisive, and astute observer of the American political landscape. A graduate of Hobart College who also served in the U.S. Air Force, Mr. Wattenberg began his own political career at the White House as a speech writer and aide to President Lyndon B. Johnson. Subsequently, he served as a campaign advisor for Senator Hubert Humphrey’s race for the U.S. Senate.

In 1972 and 1976, Mr. Wattenberg again applied his considerable skills, this time working tirelessly as a campaign advisor to my late husband, Senator Henry M. Jackson, during his campaigns for the Democratic Presidential nomination. Ben served as an important member of Scoop’s campaign team and was a close friend and confidant to my late husband. In particular, Scoop admired Ben for his tremendous grasp on the pulse of the country and the American people. In 1970, Ben had co-authored The Real Majority with Richard Scammon; it came to be known as the “Bible of both political parties” and touched on the many issues which have since come to the forefront of national politics. Few commentators, then or now, have proved to be so prescient.

As in politics, Mr. Wattenberg’s contributions to broadcasting and print media have been extensive. He demonstrated his command of the written and spoken word as former contributing editor to U.S. News and World Report and as a radio commentator on CBS’s “Spectrum.” Mr. Wattenberg has served under four Presidents: in addition to his tenure with President Johnson, he was appointed by President Carter to the American delegation to the Madrid Conference on Human Rights and by President Reagan to the Board of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, serving for ten years and becoming its vice-chairman. In 1991, President Bush appointed Ben to the Task Force on U.S. Government International Broadcasting, and in 1992, House Speaker Thomas Foley
appointed him to the Commission on Broadcasting to the People’s Republic of China.

In his sixth and latest book, Values Matter Most: How Democrats or Republicans or a Third Party Can Win and Renew the American Way of Life, Ben forecasts that values — social and cultural issues — will play an even more important role than economics in determining the outcome of the Presidential and Congressional elections. The book has been released to national critical acclaim and will no doubt become another “Bible” to many incumbents and challengers in the upcoming elections.

Ben’s candor, foresight, and clarity of perspective have won him praise from all sides of the political spectrum. Now Senior Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C., author of a nationally syndicated newspaper column, and moderator of the weekly public television show, “Think Tank,” he fearlessly continues to tackle the major issues of American political life.

The Henry M. Jackson Foundation, along with the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, is pleased to sponsor this lecture, which will be published as part of our Jackson Memorial Lecture Series.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming Mr. Ben Wattenberg.

Helen H. Jackson is Chairman of the Jackson Foundation and wife of the late Senator Henry M. Jackson.
ADDRESS

Ben Wattenberg

Helen, thank you so much for those very kind words and thank you for having me here. It is a very high honor for me — indeed for a generation of Americans interested in public policy. Scoop Jackson was our North Star, or our Northwest Star, but he was the man who led us. I'm glad that you mentioned that I had worked for President Johnson, Helen, because I wanted to begin by telling a President story. That is somewhat of a ritual for speakers coming from our nation's capital. It has a certain form, like a Japanese haiku. Each President's story always begins with a saying, "I told the President X, Y and Z," and you can put any old story in the middle. But the end of it has to be, "and so the President did X, Y and Z," and the obvious implication is that the speaker is so very important back in Washington that he tells Presidents what to do, and they do it.

My President's story involves President Johnson. I came to work for President Johnson in August 1966. One morning about a month after I got to Washington — it was a Saturday morning at 7:00 a.m., and for some strange reason I was still in bed — the phone rang. Sure enough, it was President Johnson and there ensued a phone conversation. It went on for two minutes, four minutes, six minutes, ten minutes and fifteen minutes. At about the fifteen-minute mark, my then six-year-old daughter ran downstairs and said, "Mommy, Mommy, Daddy's on the phone with Mr. Yes Sir." So if you want to know how important I am, that's how important I am.

Scoop Jackson was not a man who you would have phone conversations with where all you were saying is, "Yes Sir," because he was a man who accepted and wanted to hear from the people who worked with him. I remember an interesting vignette from 1976 about how politicians and their staff act and interact. That was the post-Watergate, post-imperial Presidency election, and the idea that President-Elect Jimmy Carter was trying to convey was that he was really a man of the people, and he therefore made a point of carrying his own garment bag off the airplane. With Scoop, you had to struggle; he wanted to carry your bag off the plane. But in any event, there's an interesting sort of contrast. When Governor Carter's aides went out to talk to the press they would always talk about their candidate as Jimmy.
Jimmy this, Jimmy that, Jimmy said, Jimmy, Jimmy, Jimmy. They all reported that this really showed what a man of the people he was. Some years later, Jodie Powell, who was then his press secretary, told me that in private Carter insisted on being called Governor. So, outside he was Jimmy and inside he was Governor. Scoop, to his great credit, was exactly the opposite. Inside, everybody called him Scoop, but outside, because of the respect they had for the man and the office, we always called him Senator.

At the time of Scoop Jackson's death, some of us who offered eulogies made a point of defining ourselves as Jackson Democrats. George Will had a different take on the matter, as is Will's wont. He declared himself a Jackson Republican, and since then, the shape of the partisan landscape has continued to go through further kaleidoscopic combinations and permutations. In my own case, as a Democrat who endorsed Clinton and is now deeply disappointed in his performance, I am still a Democrat. Of course, it is only 8:15, but I can announce definitively that I'll be a Democrat at least until midnight and maybe for at least several weeks after that. But in any event, there is a lot of turmoil and tumult in both parties these days. We have seen in recent years and months that partisan public allegiances and labels can be transitory, especially among those of us who took advantage of our constitutional right not to run for office. It is a lot easier for us to criticize people in and out of our own parties. Concerning myself, though, I would like to make one serious statement, which is: I was then and I am now and intend to remain a loyal soldier in that political combat unit that was known as Scoop's Troops. That is the constant in my political life, and just as a side line, my dad died last week at the age of 96. He was a Scoop Jackson delegate in 1976 in New York City and CBS actually did a little piece on him. Twenty years ago, Morton Dean did a piece on my dad, at then age 76, as the oldest delegate in the primary. So I guess I am a second-generation Scoop's Trooper.

Scoop Jackson was a great man with great influence. He has since become, in many ways, a legend and a myth. When men achieve that status, and for that matter when documents achieve that status, the words associated with the great man or the great document can be used to prove many points, often with contradictory meanings, and indeed are invariably used for just such purposes. Consider the Bible, the Constitution, Lincoln, Orwell, Scoop Jackson, just to begin a very long list. I mention that because this evening I'm going to talk about domestic politics and to talk about Scoop Jackson's politics as I saw them and as they influenced me, and as I think they remain in many ways relevant today. I do not, however, wish to claim any plenary power of interpretation — not on the Bible, not on the Constitution, and not on
Scoop Jackson. There are today Jackson liberals, Jackson moderates and Jackson conservatives. You are therefore on your own in making these judgments. What you are hearing is just the way one person came out with it. Prior speakers in this series — Vice President Mondale, Secretary James Schlesinger, Professor Bernard Lewis, Charles Krauthammer, Ambassador Max Kampelman, Natan Sharansky — all chose to deal principally with foreign policy issues. I hope to say a few words about that before this evening is done. But only a few words, because this is, after all, a Presidential election year, and first things first.

Scoop Jackson was a professional politician, and I never sensed that he regarded that as anything but the highest calling. We have tended to forget in recent years that it was once the case that politics was regarded as a high calling, because since then politics has come into such poor public repute. But there are times in American history, and we may be, I hope, living or about to come into another such time, when politics can become the solution and not the problem. When politics can do great things, near-magical things, even as those same politics are apparently mired in a swamp of ugly partisanship. We ought to remember some of the things that politics has brought us. Politics brought us Social Security. People said, that’s impossible, you’ll never be able to raise that kind of money, it won’t happen. All the smart people said you couldn’t do Social Security and somehow we now have Social Security, and as we all found out it costs a lot of money. People said we could never implement a Cold War strategy against the Soviet Union because it involved immense amounts of defense money, and it was political. Republicans, Democrats, moderates, liberals, conservatives got together, with the support of the voters and the taxpayers in America, and spent several trillion dollars, voted upon democratically in the political process, to ultimately win the Cold War.

Scoop was a professional politician, and he was a good and tough politician, and he never gave away anything he didn’t have to give away. He liked to win elections, and although he was never a braggart, he liked to win them big. I remember shortly after I had met Senator Jackson, we were on a plane traveling together and I asked him just in passing by what margin had he won his last Senate election. He quietly but immediately said, “83 to 17.” I thought about that for a moment, trying to think of how many numbers higher than 83 can you go. There are not a whole lot of numbers above 83. So I said, “Well, that’s pretty good. Who did you run against?” And he said, “Some airline pilot.” The conversation stopped for a moment, then he turned to me with a twinkle in his eye and said, “You know, I never even met the guy.” He was not a politician who was going to give away a shared platform to a losing competitor. Senator Jackson knew the game and he was good at it.
One reason he was very good at it was that he knew what voters felt and believed, and unlike some of his colleagues, he did not think it was a sin to agree with them. It was okay to agree with voters. If necessary, however, he was always ready to act boldly and unpopularly when a matter of principle was involved. In fact, there are those of us who think because he acted with such firmness on his geopolitical views, he decreased his chance to win the Democratic Presidential nomination, but probably increased the chance that America would win the Cold War. My guess is that Scoop would have regarded that as a good political deal.

Scoop Jackson was known principally for his foreign policy views, but he had a deep understanding of the domestic politics of his time, and, as I mentioned, I think his views then were valid. They were valid insofar as I interpret them, at least. They shaped my own thinking, particularly in this most recent book that I’ve written, which is called Values Matter Most. To see this, I think it is useful to hark back to the Presidential primary of 1972, which was the first time Scoop ran for President, and I would like to offer into evidence three items: two campaign poster lines, and one of Scoop’s favorite lines on the stump.

Our first poster, as I recall it, showed a big, smiling picture of Senator Jackson and had just one very short line of copy which said, “Common Sense for a Change.” That was in the Democratic primary. That was an interesting slogan, with a not-so-sly message to his fellow Democrats indicating that maybe they did not have a great amount of common sense. The second was more tactical in its nature and was only four words long. It was 1972 and it said, “Jackson Can Beat Nixon.” That also operated on several levels, since in 1972 Jackson could win a national election and most of the other Democrats couldn’t. They did not nominate him and the Democrats did not win. So there was, I think, some real merit to that thought. My third exhibit was Scoop’s very favorite line on the campaign trail — he used it in almost every speech at that time — which was, “I may be a liberal, but I’m not a damn fool.” That always brought down the house. That was the best line he had. And I must have heard him deliver that particular line at least a hundred times. “I’m a liberal, but I’m not a damn fool,” and it never failed, whether we were in Florida or in New York, upstate or in the city, Wisconsin, or any other place, it never failed to get rousing applause.

Now the question is, why would a man like Henry Jackson, almost 25 years ago, say that his party lacked common sense, that only a Democrat who had not abandoned common sense could win in America and that liberals were moving toward “damn foolery”? Why did he say that? He said it because it was so. I have a passage in this new book of mine that tries to sum up that era as representing some of the things that
the Democratic party, particularly the liberal wing, came to stand for
when it took perfectly good liberal ideas, often noble ideas, about civil
rights; about environmentalism; about consumerism; about feminism;
and carried them to extremes. I wrote in the book, "In the public mind,
Democrats had dug themselves a deep hole on the values issues. It does
not take a learned election expert to know that a national political party
associated with an agenda that is seen to be against the neighborhood
school; against single-family homes; against work; against prayer; against
merit; and against Christmas, and perceived to be in favor of vagrancy,
murderers, crime, promiscuity, drugs, pornography, and quotas, will soon
be in deep trouble." I didn't make those things up. They are connected
to the very real policy debates regarding busing, prayer in the schools,
Christmas greetings in the public square, the temporary end of the death
penalty, an ongoing salute to the drug culture, sexual exhibitionism and
so on. How can a Democrat run in such an atmosphere? Let me tell you
how I believe these concerns play out in 1996 with a few references to
how they are related to earlier times.

This is an election year, and as citizens we should be asking
ourselves some questions. What is at stake? What are the biggest issues?
What should be the biggest issues? And what can we realistically hope to
accomplish in this national election season? You can't do everything
with politics. There are some things you can accomplish with politics;
there are other things you can do through religion, or through your
family, or in your own mind. There are many areas where politics has
little influence. So, as voters, we ought to try to figure out how we can
use this election process to help us all.

How are we to divide up these issues? The standard way is to end
up with a triad of issues — foreign policy, the domestic economy and the
domestic non-economic issues — which are now usually called values or
social or cultural issues. Some questions do not fit neatly into one
category. There are certain issues like immigration or foreign trade, for
example, that cut across all of these lines in sort of an indistinct way. But
still, it seems to me, there are clear differences between these three sorts
of issues. In our self-imposed task as serious voters and serious citizens,
we ought to try to figure out where we can make some headway on what
it is that ails us most. The title of my book is Values Matter Most, and
I believe that, of this triad, values do matter the most. Why?

Let us begin with foreign policy. I have no doubt that within a day,
a week, a month, a year, or a decade foreign policy will, once again, be a
front-burner issue in American political life. That, I believe, is the way
the world works and America, as the sole super power these days, has
many interests around the world. I am sure that these interests will
ultimately play themselves out again on the anvil of American elections.
But for the moment, truth be told, foreign policy is flying beneath the radar of American elections. Part of this, of course, is because the Cold War is over, and part of it, I suspect, is because now that the Cold War has ended, most serious observers of the international scene do not know what course to embark upon. They are lamenting the loss of that old nice, neat world where we had the bad guys and the good guys and we knew what we had to do. For the present, everybody is floundering.

Let us now turn to the second set of issues, the economic issues. You will hear it said, if you follow the public dialogue about national elections, that economics is always the number one issue. Learned pundits and academics will agree that it is the bread-and-butter issues and the pocketbook issues that count. If the country is doing well at a particular time, then the President and his party will get reelected and that’s all there is to it. If the economy isn’t doing well at a particular time, the President and his party will not be reelected, and that’s all there is to it. Don’t believe that. Remember that this is a country where, at different times, the most important issues included slavery, women’s suffrage and Prohibition. Today, when you ask voters what the primary issue is for them, depending on the sequence of how the questioning goes, the issue of crime is frequently listed by voters as their number one concern, and with merit, in my judgment. If you need other recent evidence as to why it is not always economic concerns that matter, I would ask you to turn the calendar pages back less than two years ago. In 1994 there was a Democratic President, a Democratic House, and a Democratic Senate; the country was surging economically; yet the Democrats were badly defeated, taking their worst beating in 40 years. So it wasn’t the economy. Something else was going on in this country.

There is another case to be made against the primacy of economics in our national politics, and it is this: a lot of it is fraudulent in my judgment. Presidents of both parties are trying to put forward a myth that when they took office, they brought in a small army of GS-15s down in the basement of the White House with special little machines and they cranked out something called jobs, and so Ronald Reagan said, “I created 20 million jobs in eight years.” Quite remarkable. Before the recession, George Bush said, “And I created another three million jobs.” Now President Clinton is saying that he created eight million jobs in only three years. Just imagine; he must have a lot of people in that basement. The economic cycle, of course, had nothing to do with it, and people in this audience who work very hard had nothing to do with it, and Bill Gates had nothing to do with it. It was all those little guys in the White House cranking out jobs. The fact of the matter is, that is not the way the world works. As I sense it and understand it, after talking to learned economists, given the current situation with the power of the
Federal Reserve Bank, the new global marketplace, and our current debt and deficit, the economic power of the executive branch of the government is quite narrow.

Moreover, three big economics arguments exist in this country. The first is that the middle class in America has not made real progress in the last twenty or so years. The second one is that there is a great deal of job inequality; the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. The third one is that there is much downsizing going on and many people are losing their jobs. In point of fact, according to the way any economist, liberal or conservative, measures the phenomenon we call unemployment, we are basically at full employment. Today, unemployment stands at approximately 5-1/2 percent, which, for a variety of technical reasons, is regarded as full employment. The duration of unemployment, notwithstanding all the stories we read about downsizing, is actually a little less than it was ten or fifteen years ago. The idea that the middle class is not making any progress in this country is based principally on one statistic which deals with wages of non-managerial factory workers and is issued by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. From the early 1970s onward, this statistic remains constant. When it starts declining, people say, “See, the middle class is making less money.” Another statistic is not about wages, but about compensation for workers. That includes items like health insurance, life insurance, pensions, and vacations which make up, some people estimate, between 40 percent and 50 percent of an average worker’s pay and compensation. Unlike wages, that line does not decline but moves slowly upward.

There is much other census data that would back up that idea of an ascending economy, although not ascending as quickly or with as much health as it did in the 1950s and 1960s. Still, the overall trend of the economy is clearly ascendant and therefore quite relevant to my argument regarding the primacy of values. The idea of America dividing into rich and poor spheres involves one very interesting, but little-remarked-upon set of data, which is this: that in the last 25 years, there has been an 8 percent increase in married households and a 238 percent increase in female-headed households. We know now from census data that the median earnings of a female-headed household is about $16,000 a year. The median earnings of a married household in America is not $16,000, but $51,000, and when you suddenly start adding millions of female-headed households, the one thing that happens is that the income distribution becomes skewed. There will be more people who are not living in intact families disproportionately weighing down one side. On the other side, the people who have two-earner families will further split the income distribution.

For these reasons and others, when I approached the critical
problems in American politics, I observed what appeared to me as a big catchall issue of values. I argue that this is our biggest constellation of issues tactically; that is, they represent the best way to win elections. But it is also our most serious real problem. One can look at polling data from 1992, from 1994, and from the Republican primaries of 1996, where the pollsters ask a variety of questions of the voters that essentially amount to different variations of one theme: What do you think is the most important problem? Is it economic issues or moral issues? Is it economic issues or values issues? Almost invariably, the results show a 2-to-1 majority concluding that it is the moral issues, the issues of values, rather than economics, that matter most to them. This is while the President or the President-to-be was running in 1992 saying, “It’s the economy, stupid.” The polls are saying, “It’s not the economy, stupid.” In any event, that has been a constant in our politics in recent years. What I therefore discovered when I tried to deal with this very amorphous issue is that people use the word “values” to cover a wide array of items. The first thing that was necessary was to make an effort to divide this large-scale body of issues into more manageable, well-defined sets of issues. I propose to talk about the values issues under two subrubrics, one being “cultural issues” and one being “social issues,” so that one has a triangle, with a superior rubric, “values,” splitting off into cultural issues and social issues.

The cultural issues are issues such as abortion, prayer in the schools, sex education, the “V” Chip, same-sex marriage, homosexuality, etc. These cultural issues have certain characteristics in common. First, on many of these issues, there is sharp disagreement in this country. Second, many Americans feel that these issues are not terribly important. You will see this if you look, interestingly enough, at some of the poll results. The results of the internal polls that the Christian Coalition took of its own members show prayer in the schools as an issue ranked eighth or ninth or tenth in importance, depending on which poll you look at. Evidently, it’s not that big an issue, and there is at least one reason it is not a big issue. This prayer in the schools issue is more than likely about silent, voluntary, secular, one-minute prayer with kids probably praying that the teacher won’t look at their homework. The question is: What do you achieve when this policy is implemented, even if you are a firebrand member of the Christian Coalition?

Third, many of these cultural issues are not, for the most part, governmentally-driven or governmentally-curable issues. If one pauses to reflect — whatever one might feel about homosexuality — what on earth is the President of the United States of America supposed to do about it? There are certain little pieces of that issue, such as gays in the military, that involve an executive policy decision. But for the most part,
it is one of those issues that is not going to be dealt with primarily through politics. Yes, these cultural issues are used regularly by politicians. I do not object to them being used by politicians. They can serve a useful function even if they are not necessarily the most important issues. They do serve, for many voters, as lodestars. Someone will say, Senator So-and-So believes in right-to-life and I believe in right-to-life and therefore, he's likely to believe in a lot of other things I believe in. Or conversely, Senator So-and-So is pro-choice and I'm pro-choice, and therefore, he's the kind of guy who sees the world the way I do. They therefore are not useless issues and are often a valid part of the political process.

Social issues, on the other hand, are very different from cultural ones in many ways, principally these. Unlike cultural issues, there is not much disagreement about them. In fact, there is a large degree of consensus, at least about the major ones that I deal with which involve crime, welfare, education and affirmative action — affirmative action being a much trickier and more complex issue, in my judgment, than the others. But there is a clear consensus on those sorts of issues. Generally, people are saying we ought to be tougher in these areas. Secondly, nearly everyone in America would say that most of those issues are important. This is not prayer in the schools. This is whether you can walk out in the street at night, whether your kids are getting well-educated. Thirdly, large elements of these issues are government-driven, something which can be critical in a political election year. Many of us in recent years have been concerned about welfare, for example. If the United States Congress and the President, tomorrow morning, decided not only to end welfare as we know it, but to end welfare, period, it would be done. It is a government program. (I'm not recommending that, by the way. But it is a government program.) If the Congress of the United States and the President wanted to end affirmative action tomorrow morning, they could end it, period. It is driven by government laws, rules and regulations. These are fundamentally government-driven issues. My sense is that, in recent years, the government, at various levels, has played a certain role in eroding the values beneath these social issues, much to our detriment. Let me provide you specific examples of those four issues.

Let's turn to the issue of crime. When most of us were growing up, there was a value concerning crime, and it was a pretty simple one: Crime does not pay. Every kid knew that. But something happened in American public life between the linkage of crime and punishment starting actually before the Warren court, continuing through the Warren court, into the 1960s and the 1970s. That link between crime and punishment was, to some extent, sundered. We now have a
situation, or had a situation until very recently, where a violent criminal in the United States served about 30 percent of his sentence. First of all, once you went through the whole system, out of one hundred violent crimes, only one violent criminal actually went to prison, and then he served only 30 percent of his sentence. If a violent criminal who was sentenced to ten years in jail served only three years — and we know from some independent studies, one for example from the Brookings Institution, that the average violent criminal commits in an average year fourteen violent crimes — then the fact that the offender got only three years, not ten, means he will commit seven times fourteen, which is 98 additional crimes. By the way, violent crime went up in the last thirty years by about 500 percent to a point where you see it in the public opinion polls again and again and again as the number one issue. People are not crazy and they’re not demagogues and they’re not racists. There are a lot of people in America afraid to go out at night.

Recently, the rate of violent crime has diminished somewhat. I believe, and many criminologists believe, that this has happened because we have incarcerated more people. When you examine this issue in depth, there is not very much that criminologists really know for certain. We have a lot of theories. It would be really nice if rehabilitation worked. The fact is, looking through the studies, rehabilitation doesn’t seem to work. What the experts know is what we know, which is that a criminal in prison cannot shoot your sister. This is known as the theory of incapacitation. But what it means is that someone in prison cannot shoot your sister because he is in prison.

Let me turn to welfare, another social issue. We set up a system in the United States with the very best of intentions. We tell a young woman that if she has a baby, if she does not get married, if she does not have a job, if she does not save money, we will give her money, food, shelter, education and daycare. That brings to my mind that earlier remark, I’m a liberal but I’m not a damn fool. It does not make any sense to reward just the kind of behavior we are trying to diminish. The number-one social problem in America, in my mind, is the fact that the out-of-wedlock birthrate in this country in the last thirty years has gone from five percent to thirty-three percent. One-third of the children in America today are born out of wedlock. President Clinton has said it is the most important problem. Learned sociologists of left, right and center say it is the most important social problem. In my judgment, we are sitting on an ignited time bomb. There are tens of millions of kids growing up in families without fathers. Here is another values connection that was sundered. There was a saying, “First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes Janie with a baby carriage.” Now, in all too many cases, you might rephrase that as, “First comes sex, then
comes welfare." (Again, the fact that there is a linkage between the amount of welfare and the rate of out-of-wedlock births is subject to argument.)

Allow me to move to another social issue. In the education system, the value, as if it were etched in the blackboard in a classroom, was, "Hard work plus discipline equals a reward." Now, this idea has been replaced throughout America with something called social promotion. If one wanted to figure out two words that meant the opposite of hard work plus discipline equals a reward, they would be social promotion. It means that whether or not a student works hard, or is disciplined, he will get promoted to the next grade. Why? Because if we don't promote children to the next grade, we will harm their self-esteem, and we would not want to do that. This thought-process originated in a 1960s mentality which convinced many Americans that America was guilty for the failures of her children. So the answer was to promote children, since their mistakes were not their fault. There is a formula for how to deal with the education situation that all governors know, and which many people have been discussing for 15 years. It is a simple triad which includes setting up real standards, having real tests, and establishing real consequences based on those tests. I will return to this concept shortly.

The fourth social issue I wish to cover is affirmative action. It is a much tougher issue. The value in this case was merit, and in too many cases, many people feel that that value has been eroded. I recently interviewed on my television program Shelby Steele, who is an African American professor at San Jose State, and who wrote a book called The Content of our Character. In the book he says that race has become a résumé item. This is not the way affirmative action should work, in my judgment.

No one understands social issues and their political importance better than President Bill Clinton. Recall that, in 1992, Clinton was a Democrat generally regarded as moderately liberal who said he was going to end welfare as we know it. If former President Ronald Reagan had said he was going to end welfare, he would have been accused of being extremely right-wing. Bill Clinton also made a big point of saying he was for the death penalty. In fact, twice during the 1992 campaign he returned from the campaign trail to Little Rock to literally sign the papers and throw the switch to show that he was not Michael Dukakis. To his great credit, Clinton came up with what I believe is the best political slogan I have heard in my adult life. He used it in his announcement statement, in his acceptance statement, and in his inaugural address. He said, "No more something for nothing." Keep in mind that this is a liberal making that statement. One can only imagine what would have happened if former Republican President George Bush
had said this. He also would have been called a right-wing extremist who wanted to destroy the welfare state. Clinton, however, could say “no more something for nothing” in 1992, and he just as easily could have said, “I’m a liberal, but I’m not a damn fool.” That is how Clinton won the election in my opinion, in 1992, by saying, in a variety of ways, exactly what Senator Jackson said 20 years earlier.

Clinton did not govern the way he campaigned. He did not submit a welfare bill for eighteen months, and when he did it was insubstantial. His crime bill began well, then the liberals in Congress removed the sections that called for tougher prison sentences. His original education bill that Secretary Riley proposed was fine. It had standards, tests and consequences in it. By the time liberal Democrats and Congress had modified it, not only were the consequences gone, but it was prohibited that any of those tests use consequences. Their theory was that if a system used standards, tests and consequences, minorities and poor students would suffer. There are others who feel that it is of the greatest importance that minority and poor children be pushed to a point where they will pass tests because otherwise they will not make it in the real world.

Returning to the issue of affirmative action, President Clinton proudly said that he was going to appoint a government that looked like America, and he did to a certain extent. He hired black lawyers, white lawyers, and Latino lawyers, short lawyers and tall lawyers, male lawyers and female lawyers. They looked like America, but alas, they did not think like America, which is what one usually means by representative government. You don’t say, I will chose a long one and a tall one and a short one. You should say, I will choose a liberal one and a conservative one. That is the way I thought democracy worked.

In any event, Clinton and his government came to be seen as a liberal government in 1993 and 1994. In 1992, the exit polls showed that one out of three people, 33 percent of people voting in America, thought Bill Clinton was a liberal. In 1994, in the off-year Congressional election, that number had climbed from 33 percent to 51 percent. That is more than a 50 percent increase in the number of people in this country in 1994 who thought that Clinton and his party were liberals. Remember: the “L” word is not a good word in American politics for the reasons cited earlier.

Newt Gingrich, in the course of that 1994 campaign, also had a favorite slogan, which most everyone in the world has heard. He said, “No civilization can survive with twelve-year-olds having babies; with fifteen-year-olds killing each other; with seventeen-year-olds dying of AIDS; and with eighteen-year-olds who are getting diplomas they can’t even read.” There is a word missing in that slogan: Economics. He did
not mention economics. There is a Republican black woman, in Austin, Texas, who ran for Congress and put an interesting spin on this phrase. She said, "It is impossible to maintain civilization with twelve-year-olds having babies and carrying coloring books to the delivery room; fourteen-year-olds taking guns to school to feel safe; fifteen-year-olds dying of AIDS because they haven't learned the meaning of abstinence; eighteen-year-olds getting diplomas they can't read; twenty-one-year-olds who are grandmothers; thirty-one-year-olds who have never held a job; and sixty-five-year-olds who sleep on the floor out of fear of drive-by shootings." My own sense of the matter is, that what she said and what Newt said is at least a 50 percent exaggeration, but what is left is bad enough. These statements are all based on some serious facts.

That is where we were at the end of the 1994 election and President Clinton is nothing if not a quick study. He was regarded by one and all, right after the 1994 election and well into 1995, as a clear loser. Congressmen were literally calling the White House saying, "Please make sure the President doesn't set foot in my district, because if he does, I'm leaving" — which is always a good sign that an elected politician is not doing very well. Then he embarked on a particularly unique U-turn. I call it the politics of Zorro. If you recall, Clinton started out in 1992 trying to pull a leftward-leaning Democratic party to the right. Then he was dragged to the left, and now he is trying to drag his party to the right again. This zigzag activity represents the politics of Zorro. However one may characterize these shifts, all of a sudden Bill Clinton is in favor of guidelines for prayer in the schools, in favor of school uniforms, and anxious to drive out the criminals who are living in housing developments. He supports rating videos, restricting children's access to certain television programs and is suddenly in favor (again) of standards in schools. Clinton said in this year's State of the Union Address, "The era of big government is over." Does anybody know what the next word was? "But." The era of big government is over, "but." Then he presented a Lyndon Johnson-type laundry list of all the things that government might well do.

The issues that Clinton listed are interesting. I certainly approve of his returning to the center in that zigzag-like way, whatever the reason. Most of his statements, however, do not represent a serious, ongoing commitment. We have not seen a serious welfare bill that would end the federal entitlement and would carry on beyond this year.* We have not yet seen a serious budget bill. The question that everyone is asking is,

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*Welfare legislation has since been passed by Congress and signed by the President, with the President promising liberals to "fix it" later.
“Does he mean it?” If Clinton is reelected, it will be the first time in his adult life that he is faced with a period of time where he is not concerned with winning another election.

Who is the real Bill Clinton? Is he the moderate Democratic Leadership Council-type Governor from Arkansas, or is he the liberal Hillary-Oxford-type of the 1960s? I have come to two firm conclusions about that question. One is that I don’t know the answer. And the second is, that Clinton does not know himself. I am very sure about that, especially in light of a phone conversation I had with President Clinton after my book came out. He was very, very complimentary to the book and I think he meant every word he said. He said it was interesting that what he did wrong in 1993 and 1994 was pay too much attention to the score card and not enough to the message. That is another way of saying that he was deceived by the Democratic liberal Congress. He scored political victories and Congress wrote the laws. Consequently, in late 1994, Clinton’s people did a big spin campaign with the message: “Isn’t it remarkable President Clinton has been so successful? He has passed a greater percentage of the legislation he proposed than any President since Eisenhower.” And the American people said, “Well, that’s true. He raised taxes.” It was not important that Clinton passed legislation. What was significant was that he passed legislation and supported things that most Americans did not like. In any event, he did make this U-turn. He is now well ahead in the polls, and he very conceivably could be reelected.

We ought to now consider the Dole candidacy. About six weeks ago, when I was asked the question, if you had to bet who would win, Dole or Clinton, I said that I would not like to bet because serious people in this business don’t know the answer to that kind of question. But, if I were forced to bet, I would bet on Dole. This was six weeks ago when Dole was down about ten points in the polls. Now he is behind twenty points in the polls, and if I had to bet right now, I would probably choose Clinton. I would not, however, rule out a very close election, or the possibility of Senator Dole winning. Above all, I do not underestimate the impact of a Dole victory. Such a victory would mean that, for the first time in seventy years, we would have in the United States an all-Republican, all-conservative government. There would be a Republican President, a Republican Senate, a Republican House, a sympathetic Supreme Court, a vast majority of Republican Governors, and probably a majority of Republican state legislatures. This is unheard of in recent American political history. My own view is that it would serve the Republicans right, because although there are a few things they
do agree on — which is they hate Bill Clinton and they think there is too much government — beyond that, they are a fractionated party, almost as bad as the Democrats. There are neo-conservatives, paleo-conservatives, Wall Street conservatives, Main Street conservatives, K Street conservatives, social conservatives, supply-side conservatives, tax-cutting conservatives, budget-balancing conservatives, compassionate conservatives, and the list goes on and on. So just as a professional observer, I think it would be fun, but we will see whether that happens.

If Clinton should win, I think there would be less of a change. I do not think we will have both a Democratic House and Senate. In any event, the trend in the United States and in all the modern industrial countries now is toward some sort of devolution of power from the federal government out to the states. Some say now that Clinton is a shoe-in; I don’t believe that. A year ago, after the elections, he was called irrelevant, and it was said that there was a Republican revolution occurring. This country does not want or need a revolution. It could use a nice healthy evolution, in my judgment. In any event, the Republicans have dug a ditch for themselves since then. In some measure they were unfairly characterized concerning what issues they stood for, and then entered into the Republican primaries where they attacked one another with tens of millions of dollars worth of advertising, accusing each other of being too liberal. Steve Forbes said Bob Dole is really a liberal, and Bob Dole said Steve Forbes is really a liberal, and they both said Lamar Alexander is way too liberal, and Pat Buchanan said everybody’s too liberal. They spent about 50 to 60 million dollars telling the American people that it was the Republicans who were too liberal. At the same time, again flying beneath the radar, Clinton and the labor unions put 60 million dollars worth of unanswered advertising on the air around the country saying that Bill Clinton is tough on crime, Bill Clinton is tough on welfare, and that the Republicans are really right-wing extremists.

That is how the current situation stands. One should remember, however, that these things tend to even out. When Americans are asked to identify themselves politically, by 2 to 1 they are more likely to say conservative than liberal. (37 percent of Americans say conservative and about 17 percent of Americans say liberal.) That is a very, very important piece of data. Gradually, it seems to me, the Republicans will begin to make that case. They should have been making it three months ago. They are now beginning to get their 60 million dollars and 160 million dollars together, and are no longer criticizing each other. There are many wonderful stories about Republicans and conservatives attacking each other. Gingrich, some years ago, called Dole “the tax collector for the welfare state,” which Dole did not appreciate. Dole
then asked if you had heard the good news, bad news story. The good news was that a bus full of supply-siders went over a cliff, the bad news was that there were three empty seats. Jack Kemp came back into the argument on the supply-siders side and said, "Did you hear that Bob Dole's library burned down. All three books were consumed in the flames and he hadn't even finished coloring one of them." Clinton is going to make the case that he's a liberal but he's not a damn fool. The Republicans will say he is both. Clinton will say that Dole and the Republicans are right-wing extremists and Dole will have a slight twist on that earlier line of Scoop Jackson's. He will say, "I'm a conservative but I'm not a damn fool."

And that's how this election will play out. It's a very, very important election. And it is what an election should be about: liberals, conservatives, how to govern, and the role of government. Both sides will move in toward the center saying, "I'm a liberal but I'm not a damn fool" and "I'm a conservative but I'm not a damn fool." And, the social issues — welfare, affirmative action, crime and particularly education — are going to be extremely significant. In fact, they are, as I said earlier, our most important issues because these are the issues that make democracies most vulnerable. For all its flaws, which are many, we have shown that market democracies can create wealth better than any system known to man. What we have not yet answered is an age-old question: Can you have freedom and discipline? That is a question that goes back to the beginning of political philosophy. That is where the values issue comes into play and the idea of "no more something for nothing." It is more important than just domestic politics because America is the world's only superpower. It is said again and again, the world is "Americanizing," democracy is in bloom around the world. That may be true, and I hope it is, but, there are enemies of democracy and there are enemies of liberty around the world, and one can hear voices around the world saying, "Who are these Americans to tell us how to live." When liberty beckons, these retrograde voices say, "Don't do it. It doesn't even work in America. We know best. Our people are not ready for liberty. We know best. Liberty brings pornography. Liberty brings alcohol. Liberty brings crime. Liberty brings welfare dependency, and it breeds separatism." These are the issues where we are, in fact, vulnerable, and where we must, in fact, reform ourselves.

I would like to close with a thought that is expressed quite eloquently in "America the Beautiful." We are all mostly familiar with the first stanza and the last stanza. The first one is geographical in nature: "Oh beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain, for purple mountain majesties above the fruited plain." That is very nice, very beautiful. The last stanza is, "Oh beautiful for patriot dreams that
see beyond the years, thine alabaster cities gleam, undimmed by human
 tears. America, America, God shed his grace on thee, and crown thy
good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea.”

There is a middle stanza that not many people know which I would
like to close with, and it deals with that relationship of freedom and
discipline. It is: “America, America, God mend thine every flaw, confirm
thy soul in self-control, thy liberty in law.”

And my thought is that is good politics and that is good policy.
Discussion

Question: What did President Clinton say to you on the telephone?

Answer: It was a great phone call. We talked for almost an hour about what a terrific book I had written, even though it was critical of Clinton. He said that he had made a lot of mistakes and had acted as a prime minister instead of as a president. He said that he did not really like his own welfare bill, and as I mentioned, that he had stopped paying attention to the message and started paying attention to the score card. The President suggested that we would get a very tough welfare bill. I believe that some very cynical journalists immediately said, “Oh, he was just stroking Wattenberg. Wattenberg is a well-known conservative Democrat; he’s just telling him what he wants to hear.” My own thought is that the President believed absolutely everything he said to me at that moment. In his next call, however, he will say things that are directly contrary to what he told me and also believe it. He is very charming, very bright, very knowledgeable, and quite mysterious. There are a lot of theories about his leadership and decision-making. It’s really Hillary. It’s really the liberal staff. It’s really the Democratic Congress. I do not get a chance to vote for Hillary, so I’m just saying, “It’s Clinton, stupid.” Let’s see what he does between now and the election, and as I said before, I’m not sure he knows what he would do after that, if he wins. I think he makes decisions day by day on an ad-hoc basis.

Question: If a tough welfare policy was now enacted into law, would the illegitimacy rate go from thirty-three percent back to the golden era when it was only five percent?

Answer: No, I do not think it would go back to five percent, but I believe it would, over time, diminish. I think we should not be encouraging, subsidizing, and supporting it, and the tragedy of this whole equation is, one cannot simply cut welfare because the lives of little children are involved. We must figure out a way to keep children alive and healthy, while at the same time, sending a message to the younger sisters of these women which says: “It doesn’t work any more. It’s hurting you, it’s hurting your kids.” I believe, as I mentioned earlier, that government cannot do everything. There are a lot of other issues
involved, for example religion and the family. The government is partly culpable for this, however, and must play a role. The first law of politics is that as soon as one recognizes a policy as wrong-headed — stop it.

I interviewed, in the course of my book, some welfare mothers in Kansas City, and then interviewed some young men who had fathered children out-of-wedlock and were paying child support. If you think that I believe welfare is bad, you ought to talk to some of those welfare mothers and welfare fathers. They think it is a plague that has hit their communities. We are not helping those people, although that is what we set out to do. Again, it is not a perfect world. No, I don’t believe we can end welfare abruptly, but I think we can change course.

**Question:** What do you believe is the proper balance of liberty versus discipline? For example, is Singapore’s approach perhaps best?

**Answer:** Singapore has an authoritarian government where one cannot always speak freely. Singapore is sharply disciplined in many ways compared to the United States. When that young American, about a year and a half ago, slashed somebody’s tires, his punishment was to get six lashes on his bare buttocks, and this became a big, big issue. My own sense, being such a smart political pundit, was that, if the American people were ever asked about that, the idea of some Asians whipping an American boy would be so outrageous, we might bomb Singapore the next day. Two-thirds of the American people said, “Right on, whack him.” It is quite interesting.

What is the right balance? I do not want to live in Singapore. I did not want to live in the Soviet Union even though it had a very low crime rate when Stalin was in power. We don’t necessarily have to look at any other countries in Western Europe or elsewhere for examples. They look to us for examples. It seems to me that there are enough candidates today who are prepared to take a strong stance on crime. I think one sees this attitude in the Republicans, in the conservatives, and in Clinton on certain days. I think one also sees it among a lot of blacks and minorities in America who are really the victims of crime in this country. I believe opinions are beginning to turn, and that we can have a balance of liberty and order and when this begins to happen, the country’s best years are ahead of it. It was just ten years ago that people were saying, the American century is over. Japan is going to be number one. Taiwan is going to be number one. Watch out for the four tigers and the united Europe. The reality since then is that we have economically left those nations in the dust. People say America is the sole superpower, and this is probably the first time in history there has been a country that has been as influential as the United States. We are the world’s
leading military power, diplomatic power, geopolitical power, educational power, cultural power, and linguistic power. Never has there been a country like this. We have got a lot going for us and I do not wish to present a preachment of gloom.

Question: Don't you think that we, as a nation, would accomplish more in solving issues if we reduced our massive defense spending?

Answer: The Cold War is over. Why haven't we stopped spending? Why don't we spend less money on defense and more money on social welfare, on the war on poverty? I worked for President Johnson. I was involved in a lot of those programs. Unlike other conservatives, I believe a lot of them worked. I also think a lot of them did not work. I think the worst ones are those that were counterproductive. Spending money is not the problem. Education spending per child in real dollars has gone up 300 percent in the last couple of decades, while our test scores have gone down. One cannot fix the education system by doubling the education budget. The education system in this country will improve when the government decides, "Let's use common sense for a change." When it says students will not get promoted unless they meet certain standards, certain tests and certain consequences. Those are not money problems.

The same is true of the welfare situation. If you could assure me that if we spend another half a trillion dollars on welfare and poverty programs, we could cure it, I would be the first person to support it. But that idea does not seem to be working. We had a war on poverty. We won a big part of it. We won the part of the war on poverty dealing with the elderly. People forget that. When I started writing these sorts of social demographic books, to find poverty one looked at the column that said "over age 65," and that is where one found all the big numbers. That has changed. Of course, in part it engendered the Social Security problem, but that is another issue entirely. There are certain parts of the poverty equation that can be improved with money. One can help elderly people by giving them more money when they are poor. They will not go out and have out-of-wedlock children or commit crimes. There are other approaches that have not worked and may actually have been counterproductive. We have to rethink these issues, and I do not think it is an either/or question. I think this country has enough money to have as strong a military as we decide we need and enough money to do what we have to do in terms of social welfare. We ought not to put a dollar sign on everything because a lot of these problems are not solvable by dollars; the social welfare budget over the last few decades has consistently grown. As I say, I support much of this spending, but some of the things we've done wrong, we've been doing dreadfully wrong. I would reject the equation.
Question: How do you see the federal government influencing crime and education policy when these are mostly state issues? The federal government does not have much of a role here.

Answer: The last question was asked by Bob Low from New York City. Mr. Low is a veteran and an experienced political legislator who knows what he is talking about. He is quite right that most crime issues are not federal matters and most education issues are not federal matters. As I indicated in the beginning, these are government-wide problems, not just the responsibility of the federal government or the President.

I would say, however, that in the realms of crime and education, the federal government and the President should be more involved than the law allows. The crime bill originally had in it some carrots and sticks that told the states that they must incorporate truth-in-sentencing into their state laws. If you ruled that a person would serve a seventeen-year sentence, it was going to be a seventeen-year sentence and you could not take off less than, I think, fifteen percent for good behavior. If the state did not do that, it would not get the money. So, as you know, the federal government has a lot of ways of doing things. On education, the original Goals 2000 bill set-up I thought to be a very intelligent, voluntary, but powerful set of incentives and disincentives for the states to adapt serious curricular standards and to evaluate them, have tests, and enable them to use consequences to yield tests with teeth. It got rejected by conservatives who did not want any federal control whatsoever over education and especially by liberals who said you should not harm minorities. There are things that can be accomplished on the federal level. What cannot be done on that level should be done on the state and local levels.

Question: Do you think that Bob Dole’s resignation from the Senate will help his presidential campaign?

Answer: I don’t think it is a big deal. I believe sooner or later Dole was going to have to relinquish his Senate Majority Leader duties. He thought at first he could use that position as a platform to get the media exposure that he wanted to express his views, but because of the Byzantine nature of the Senate and the Congress and the separation of powers, anytime he raised an issue, the Democrats were able to stymie it. Dole has a propensity to talk in legislative language that nobody understands anyway. He has since decided to do things differently, has received some headlines and, in a point of fact, in the last week or two, he has been doing a lot better. Clinton has suddenly been doing a lot worse. There is a great deal of volatility in any campaign.
Question: Regarding the drug war, there have been many suggestions to legalize and regulate drug use. How do you feel about this possibility?

Answer: The suggestions have not been very good ones. This is a very tough issue. I have talked to drug experts, and the most serious ones have noted that this is not the first drug epidemic we have had in the United States. We had a terrible drug epidemic in this country at the beginning of the century, and it took 20 to 25 years using punishment and interdiction and re-education to reduce drug use to reasonable levels. Then it rose again in the '50s and the '60s and it will be torturous work to return again to reasonable levels. The easiest solution may seem to decriminalize it, but the more one examines this option, the worse it seems. In my judgment, that policy would say to young kids, “Sure, go ahead, it’s okay, you can get it legally in the store.” I would hate to have on my conscience the idea of encouraging young people to get on drugs. It is a very, very difficult problem. I believe we can make some headway, and that we have made some headway. The solution must occur on the demand side, not on the supply side, because it has always been easy to get drugs in this country. We could have a hundred Coast Guard cutters patrolling the waters, but drugs will still get in. One must explain to children the extreme dangers of trying drugs.

Question: Do you think we will have a balanced budget before the 1996 election?

Answer: My sense is that we are going to move toward a balanced budget and probably arrive at it, and there are two important issues here. One, it is good that we will do it; and two, one will never even notice it because it will become the one problem that no longer exists. It is like the absence of a negative, something like saying, “This building isn’t on fire.” Everybody should say, “Yeah, hooray, this building isn’t on fire,” or, similarly, “The debt is not growing larger.” Take crime, welfare or any other issue. I think we will deal with them only because we have to. Some of it goes beyond the realm of ideology, and is simply arithmetic. One must address Medicare and Social Security, otherwise those graph lines keep going up and lines cannot go up forever. One cannot have taxation at a rate of more than 100 percent. We can stipulate that. It will stop somewhere short of 100 percent, and it is getting there pretty quickly and will happen. Then, as I say, we will hardly notice it.

Thank you all very much.
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- Sen. Sam Nunn
- Sen. Alan K. Simpson
- Sen. Arlen Specter
- Sen. Ted Stevens
- Sen. John W. Warner
- Rep. Sidney R. Yates
- Rep. Don Young

## Staff
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- Susan H. Gould
  - Office Manager
- Katell Guellec
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- Anju Reejhsinghani
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