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Part 1

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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INTERVIEW OF THE FIRST LADY
TELEVISION, PORTLAND

Q Again, welcome to Maine. Obviously this administration has faced some tough times. One of the things that we think the administration hasn't got credit for is the number of accomplishments that have taken place within the past couple years. Talk about that.

MRS. CLINTON: In the last 20 months we have really moved the country forward. We have made a lot of progress. There's a lot more to be done, but we are moving in the right direction. When you look at a budget that now for three years in a row will bring the deficit down, which hasn't happened since Harry Truman was president.

And whether you look at some of the other things that are going to affect the way people live, family medical needs, so a parent can take care of their children; the earned income tax credit, so literally thousands of Americans will not have to pay income taxes.

Whether you look at immunizing all of our children, which we are now on the path to doing. More children in Head Start. Or national service. Expanding the college loan program because we know how important it is for young people to get educated.

And then apprenticeships for young people who don't go on to college. Because the people who work here in Maine and may not have college degrees, deserve just as much respect and dignity as those who do go on to college.

Whether you are talking about the kinds of things to expand trade opportunities. The Bath Iron Works, which is now going back to work, thank goodness. There are so many things which this administration has already achieved in 20 months.

And there's one that happened today that I would

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like to quickly mention. I remember complaining bitterly as a private citizen when I read these stories during the 1980s about \$500 screwdrivers that the government would buy. You could go down to a hardware store and buy a couple of them for five dollars.

Well, today the President signed a bill to change the way the Federal Government buys things, which is going to save us millions and millions of dollars.

We are really changing the way that government works. We are changing the way this budget works. We are really on the path that I think most people in Maine voted for in 1992.

So I want them to know about what has really occurred and not listen to all of the radio talk shows and some of the other sources that are allied to opponents of the President who don't always tell you everything that's going on in Washington.

Q Recently Senator Mitchell has been talking a lot about the difficulty he has had with the Republicans in the Senate with a lot of threatened filibusters, filibusters stopping legislation important to the administration. Obviously, I am sure you would like to talk about that. It's been frustrating for the White House and for leadership in Congress.

But I think it's also true that the President has had some trouble in his own party. That must be equally frustrating, I would think.

MRS. CLINTON: You know, you always have independent people in whatever party. And I think that's to be expected in American politics. But the vast majority of Democrats have supported this president. And the vast majority of Republicans have obstructed this president. And the worst example was the way the Republicans in the Senate killed the lobbying bill.

Many people in this state either voted for Bill Clinton or for Ross Pierot because they wanted to end the influence of lobbyists in Washington. And this administration did push through a prohibition on using tax deductibility for lobbying, and then tried to push through a lobbying bill that would have changed the way Washington

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works.

At the last minute the Republicans in the Senate filibustered it. Jesse Helms left the floor of the Senate and walked off into a hallway, where he was met by cheers from lobbyists. That's what the Republicans are doing. They talk one thing when they come home. But down in Washington they are the lobbyists' best friends.

Today in the paper you have got Newt Gingrich and Bob Dole telling all of the Political Action Committees they had better get in line and give them money. That's wrong.

This administration, your Senator Mitchell, they tried to stop it, and were blocked because of the rules in the Senate letting the minority of a minority decide what will be passed.

I hope the people of Maine will send a Democratic senator to follow George Mitchell. We don't need anybody else to help filibuster the kind of progress that is being made in Washington. And I think, unfortunately, the Republicans have taken that point of view. They are just against the kind of forward progress. They want to take us back to the 1980s to trickle-down economics. We can't afford that.

Q We have time for one more question. Obviously, health care, you must be disappointed about the way it turned out. Senator Mitchell turned down the Supreme Court nomination to shepherd that through the Senate.

Do you wish, from the start of that process, that you had been more open to try to get Americans to understand what was going on? In the end it was quite clear that most Americans just simply did not understand what was going on.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I don't think we did a good enough job in communicating with the country. And I am very sorry about that. Because what we were trying to do would have helped 95 plus percent of Americans.

And the fact that some Americans became convinced that health care reform would hurt them is because they bought into the special interests lobby campaigns that were run against health care reform.

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So we could have done, and we will do a better job of communicating next time, because if people are going to be opposed to something, I want them to have accurate information. I don't want them to get their information from radio talk show hosts or direct mail campaigns or television advertising. It is really the tool of special interests who make money out of the health care system at the expense of other Americans.

INTERVIEWER: That's it for me. Thank you so much.

(End of interview.)

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