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RATHER, DAN
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REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY
IN INTERVIEW WITH DAN RATHER

MR. RATHER: Good evening, and welcome to our special live edition of "48 Hours." We've moved to an office just off the floor of the House of Representatives or (inaudible) where President Clinton himself has just detailed his vision of health care reform.

Now, involved -- very involved from the very beginning, start to finish -- in preparing this plan and deeply involved in trying to convince the Congress to pass is, is the First Lady of the United States of America, Hillary Rodham Clinton. Mrs. Clinton, welcome. Thank you for being with us.

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you.

MR. RATHER: When you walked in, it was pretty clear you were excited and, also, maybe a little nervous. Am I wrong about that?

MRS. CLINTON: No, you are absolutely right. I kid my husband a lot that I get so nervous for him and I get so nervous for my daughter when she does something, that oftentimes, if I'm on the sidelines of a sports event for her or watching him make a speech, I'm more nervous than they are.

MR. RATHER: Next week begins the hard, really hard chore, of trying to sell this to Congress, and you'll be the lead-off witness. Are you nervous about that?

MRS. CLINTON: I am. But I'm also very excited and very committed, because I think that it is going to happen. Like the President said tonight in his speech, it will happen this year, because we can't wait any longer; we can't afford to let the system continue to do what it's doing.

So I think all of us are very ready to take on this challenge (inaudible) the challenge.

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MR. RATHER: You've been working hard already to introduce this plan to people, sell the plan. Are you having fun with this or is it all just hard work? It looks to be very (inaudible).

MRS. CLINTON: Well, it is, but it's also fun because I have met so many wonderful people all around the country. I have been in the living rooms of farm families talking about health care problems; I've been sitting on loading docks talking to people who told me their issues; and I've spent lots of time with doctors and nurses and others, who have given me the ideas that are in this plan about what we can do and how we can do it better.

I have fun seeing people who really care, being involved in solving problems, instead of just wringing their hands and talking about how terrible things are. So it's been a great experience for me.

MR. RATHER: (Inaudible). First, let me run down a checklist and, if you will -- and this can be very short -- just give me a yes or no answer.

Will every legal resident of the United States be covered under this, including the 37 million now that are not covered?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes.

MR. RATHER: Will this entail any major increase in taxes?

MRS. CLINTON: No.

MR. RATHER: Will this help reduce the deficit, perhaps by as much as \$91 billion (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, it will help reduce the deficit.

MR. RATHER: And will all this be accomplished without reducing the quality of health care (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. It can be done. And the reason it can be done is because, as the President pointed out, leading experts like Dr. Koop know that we spend billions of dollars in inefficiently and wastefully already.

I think, for many Americans, it is a personal experience that they have had. They know that there is waste in the

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system. They may not know how much there is.

But we are committed to getting that out and using the savings that will be available once we get the system working more efficiently and not imposing any kind of new big tax on Americans, because why would we want to put even more money on top of a system in which there are so many savings that we should be able to realize first? And that's how we think about it.

MR. RATHER: (Inaudible) you said yes, it would cover the 37 million not covered; yes, very legal resident in the country is covered; yes, it would help increase the deficit; no (inaudible). It sounds too good to be true.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think that it may because we're not used to what other countries take for granted, Dan. I think that's been one of the biggest surprises to me that I have learned about this, and I have tried to study, since I didn't know and wasn't an expert when I started.

Most countries with whom we compete spend less money per citizen on their health care system, insure everybody inside their borders, and provide more benefits than most of our average insurance policies do here.

One example we have here in our country that does nearly the same is Hawaii which, because employers are required to cover their employees, nearly 100 percent of all Hawaiians have access to health care. They emphasize primary and preventive health care. They spend less money per citizen than we do in the rest of the country.

I think there are enough examples, whether we look at that state or look at the Mayo Clinic, like the President cited, that is one of the finest health care facilities in the world. They haven't raised their rates as fast as many other parts of our health care system have. In fact, they've kept them below 4 percent this past year.

We know it can be done because it's being done all over the United States. It's just not being done everywhere at the same time.

MR. RATHER: The President underscored that no one should think that this comes without sacrifice. It is going to have to be paid for. As I understand it -- correct me if I'm wrong -- the emphasis in the present (inaudible) is one that requires businesses to take a lot of the cost.

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The Republicans have proposed an alternative, as I understand it, (inaudible) individuals. Why is President Clinton's plan better than that of the Republicans?

MRS. CLINTON: I think the first thing I would like to say is that we are very impressed by the Republican approach because there are so many features in common. The Republicans believe that there does have to be an individual requirement. Every individual has to be insured, just as some states now require people to have auto insurance.

We think that the burden ought to be shared, as it is now in our country, between employers and employees. But we're not that far apart, once we recognize that we cannot get to universal coverage unless we require people to make a contribution.

The reason that the President believes that the employer-employee system will work better is because it's what is already working. That's the first point. Most of us get our insurance through our workplaces.

Secondly, because there are many businesses now that are bearing the full load because of those businesses that are not making any contributions, many employees who are bearing the full load because other employees aren't making any contribution at all.

And I think the other point is that we would worry that if individuals were required on their own, we wouldn't know quite how to keep track of all of them and we would worry that employers who now insure employees would stop doing so because there wouldn't be any reason or certainly any requirement for them to continue doing so.

But I would like to stress the way those two approaches are similar, and we will be working with the Republicans on their proposal and sharing all of the details behind ours. The real bottom line is we want everybody in the system; we want everybody insured; and we want to spread that burden fairly so that every person has some kind of contribution to take responsibility for their health care.

MR. RATHER: (Inaudible) negotiation has been done and the President has said and you have said it in as many words, that this isn't written in stone. But what is non-negotiable?

MRS. CLINTON: I think that the principles the President

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has laid out are non-negotiable. The details as to how we fulfill each of those principles we are open to discuss.

But, for example, we believe we have to have every American insured. Any plan that would not result in every American being insured as soon as possible is something that we don't think will work, that we will only have to revisit the problem if we do not get every American insured. That's an example of a principle that we believe very strongly in. But the details as to how we would actually achieve that is what we're going to be talking about in this country.

MR. RATHER: And true or untrue, that there is going to be built, to achieve that, another huge government bureaucracy (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: No, not true. Right now we have, probably, as the President said, the most bureaucratic health care system in the world, both in our federal system through our programs of Medicare and Medicaid, and in the private system, where insurance companies have millions of forms and all kinds of checks that check the checkers and all the things that we now pay for that we don't need.

We think we will immensely simplify the system. We will remove a lot of the bureaucracy and the regulations from it and we will keep striving, as we develop this bill, to get it as slim and as inexpensive as it can be. We don't want to spend money on forms for people to fill out. We don't want to take nurses away from the bedsides of very sick children. We want the money we spend on health care to go to health care.

MR. RATHER: (Inaudible). Is it possible (inaudible) that when this gets through, whether it passes or not, that we will reach the point where a First Lady, any First Lady, can be judged on the quality of her work?

MRS. CLINTON: I hope that every woman will be judged on her work, her contribution to her family, what she thinks is important. I am very grateful for this chance to not only help my husband but serve my country. It's very important to me.

But I think all of the women who have been in this position before me have made their contributions, and I don't want to substitute one stereotype for another. I want every woman, whether she be married to a President or out there supporting a family as a single parent or everything in

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between, to feel that she is a worthy, valuable person who is making the contribution that is right for her. That's what I hope we will be able to do. If I've contributed in some way to helping women be seen as who they are and not as how someone else expects them to be, I think that would be good for all of us.

MR. RATHER: (Inaudible). Did you or didn't you find (inaudible) "wonder how I can keep Bill talking about health care?" Or was there a time when he just said, "Hillary, I love health care; I'm into it. But can you please talk about something else?"

MRS. CLINTON: We've had to impose moratoriums on each other during the last eight months, you know, "No more talk, no more talk about any of this business. We're just going to watch a movie or, you know, have some fun." We've

had to remind each other of that.

MR. RATHER: Speaking of (inaudible), I'm told repeatedly that you're prepared to go to hell and back if necessary to sell this program to the American people. But the question, are you prepared to do, as Vice President Al Gore did to (inaudible), are you prepared to pay the ultimate price and (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I don't know about that. I mean, you got to draw the line somewhere. I'm not sure about that. He was awfully good, though. I thought he was terrific.

MR. RATHER: Thank you very much, Hillary. We appreciate you coming. Thank you for (inaudible).

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you.

MR. RATHER: And now let's go back over to the (inaudible) Office Building and (inaudible).

(End of tape.)

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