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PROVIDENCE RHODE ISLAND

THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary

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October 8, 1993

INTERVIEW OF THE FIRST LADY  
BY CHANNEL SIX  
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

Q I know our time is limited. So I'm just going to jump right in. Health care reform is like a piece of cloth. You can't pull on it in one place without it affecting the entire area. And yet people are afraid. They're concerned. They don't see how it will work in concert.

And many people are even willing to prop up a system they know isn't working because of the economics involved, in terms of keeping jobs on the line. So how do you address those fears of seeing it as a whole because people have a tendency to see the piece that touches them?

MRS. CLINTON: I think that everyone is finally recognizing that we can't go on the way we have. The system we have now is not a whole. It is a patchwork system in which many of the parts are broken.

And what we need to do is to preserve what is right about our health care system and then fix what is broken. In order to do that, we don't have to reinvent the wheel. In fact, this whole plan the President put forward builds on our strength while trying to correct those things that are wrong.

So that, for example, most Americans will continue to get their health insurance the way they always have, through the workplace. We will enhance quality by taking what we now know and making it public, making it possible for you and me to find out how well a hospital or a doctor is doing.

So what we're trying to do is to preserve the good strong qualities of this system but fix those things that are not working before they drag the whole down, which is what's happening now.

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Q We talk about the regional buying pools. And while on the surface of it, it sounds wonderful, what about areas like San Francisco, where there are 35,000 cases of HIV, or southern New England, where there is a disproportionate number of elderly? Will that lead to regional redlining?

MRS. CLINTON: No. Not at all. In fact, what is happening now is redlining. The insurance industry is redlining against areas where, either because of some kind of disease like AIDS or because of the aging population, the rates are going up astronomically.

What we want to do is to say, if everybody is in these big pools -- 35,000 people in a pool of a million or a million and a half is not a big percentage. Thirty-five thousand, even taken one by one in a small or medium-sized business of 30 or 40 or 100 employees is a huge percentage. That's why the costs go up so much.

If we take older Americans and we preserve Medicare, but we give them additional benefits within Medicare, like prescription drugs and long-term care, we will be saving money in the long run.

Right now a lot of older Americans end up in the hospital because they couldn't afford the prescription medication that would have kept them out of the hospital. So we think that actually spreading the risk among more people will lower everybody's costs.

Q But where is the incentive for the insurance company to come in and insure or provide coverage for an area that does seem to be in poverty?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, because there is going to be a lot of competition that is not out there now, because if you want to stay in the insurance company, you're going to have to insure everybody.

The way insurance companies have been making money is by eliminating people from coverage. They have eliminated people who have preexisting conditions. They've eliminated people who couldn't afford the high rates by basically pricing them out of the market.

If you want to stay in the insurance business in

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the new market that we're trying to create, you will want to insure everybody. That's the way insurance used to be done. You know, it used to be that insurance companies made their money by a little bit of money on a whole lot of people. Then they figured out -- and the government didn't stop them -- they could make a whole lot more money by insuring fewer and fewer people, eliminating people from coverage --

Q The risk.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. Trying to find the healthiest people to insure and then charging them a lot of money, but not having to worry about anybody really getting very sick because they've eliminated those who are the most risky.

So we want to go back to the old-fashioned way. Let's insure everybody: the old, the young, the sick, the healthy. You know, all of us someday are going to be old. And most of us someday are going to be sick.

Q So will there be subsidies for areas that do have large populations of elderly or areas that are harder hit by crime?

MRS. CLINTON: No. There will be subsidies for individuals who cannot afford the health care insurance. But when these large purchasing pools are set up, we've already learned that people who go into large buying units -- whether it's a very large corporation or, as we have in many parts of the country, a very large group that buys insurance -- the prices go down.

Q Is it a citizenship-based plan?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. American citizens and legal residents will be entitled to health security cards.

Q What will happen to the influx of illegal immigrants coming up from the south, coming over from (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, we hope that we will slow it, because we're certainly not going to give illegal immigrants the same rights to health care that American citizens are entitled to. We don't want to do anything that would encourage any more illegal immigration. We want to stop that. It is undermining many of our institutions.

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Now, certainly if illegal immigrants are already here and they are subject to some kind of health care emergency or as a public health matter they need to be vaccinated against some kind of disease, we will continue to do that. We do that now.

But we are drawing a line. We want to take care of American citizens first. We want to have health care security for Americans. And we do not want to encourage more people illegally to come into this country, undermining our economy and our health care system.

Q But there is the issue of compassionate care. What happens if someone who is here illegally is in a car accident, for example?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, if they are here illegally and they're in an accident, they will have care. Obviously, we're not going to leave people on the side of the road. We don't do that now. But we will try to collect the payment for that. And we will try to make sure that we don't extend any incentive for illegal immigrants to try to use our health care system. It's not fair. It's not right.

Q Trying to get this through Congress, Congress that depends in large part on the contributions from the health care industry, arguably some of the biggest lobbyists in Washington, it's one thing to take the message to the people. But how are you going to sway the politicians whose very careers depend on the money that they are getting from these institutions?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, because I want to take the message to people who I hope will take the message to Congress and say, "Look out for us." You know, it doesn't do anybody any good if members of Congress or any other political leaders don't pay attention to what's going on.

And the only way we can make sure they will pay attention is for enough people to say, "We want to be taken care of. Put aside the campaign contributions. Put aside the lobbyists and their influence. Listen to us." And I'm very confident that as people do, then we're going to have the kind of health care plan we can be proud of.

(The interview was concluded.)

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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June 13, 1994

INTERVIEW OF THE FIRST LADY  
CONDUCTED BY PHYLLIS RICHMAN  
STATE DINNER, EMPEROR OF JAPAN

Q Tell me about why this particular menu and what you were hoping to achieve.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, Walter started making suggestions probably about six to eight weeks ago. We responded. And he came up with new ideas. We also took into account some food preferences that our guests would have --

Q For example?

MRS. CLINTON: I don't want to get into that. Not anything exotic. But there are some things that they would prefer not to be served. I always ask before. That's important.

Q Does the Emperor drink alcohol?

MRS. CLINTON: I believe he does. I do not know that for sure, but I believe he does, unless I am mistaken. I am not sure. This is his second time here.

I am trying to remember. We had dinner with him last July in the Imperial Palace, and I didn't notice that he didn't. I will check on that for you.

Q Tell me what you were trying to achieve with this menu.

MRS. CLINTON: We wanted it to be seasonal but also well presented, creative. Obviously, delicious. And we have not had a formal tasting for the menu, but we have eaten various components of it, if you will, for the last weeks.

We have been very pleased with the reaction of people at the events at the White House since Walter has become the chef. There have been a number of people who have gone out of their way to compliment the presentation, the

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flavorfulness, the use of odd combinations of ingredients, and that it is less fatty than many typical menus would be.

This has been a very good experience for us. He is fun to work with, he is even-tempered, he is adventurous. He seeks out ideas from other chefs, and is interested in many different kinds of cuisine.

He manages the kitchen very well. Seems unflappable. And has produced some lovely meals and reception menus since he is here.

Q So you haven't consulted any other chefs for this?

MRS. CLINTON: He may have, but I have not.

Q Why did you decide to do platters instead of plated service?

MRS. CLINTON: We are doing both.

Q Plated service for the first course?

MRS. CLINTON: And for the salad. Platters for the main course and desert. Partly because of presentation.

Q Do you worry about breaking tradition?

MRS. CLINTON: Not if it's done well, I don't. I think a very attractive plate is sometimes more appropriate than a platter that is confusing to guests. So we are going to try and just hybrid.

Q Did you read (inaudible) Martin's column on this?

MRS. CLINTON: No, I didn't.

Q She and I had a big argument on this subject.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, dear. Tell me.

Q She thinks that the only proper thing is plated service. And I say, for one thing, nobody knows how to serve themselves anymore.

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MRS. CLINTON: She prefers French -- I think you've got a very good point. I think many guests are more comfortable. But I also think it depends upon the presentation. So what we have worked out I think will work in the element we are serving and in the environment, vacation --

Q Well, you are breaking a lot of traditions. You are serving up fish entree --

MRS. CLINTON: Yes.

Q Tell me about that.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, we eat a lot of fish, as I think you and I talked about before. We think that fish can be beautifully prepared and be very elegant. Also, its taste and its presentation. This particular fish is one that we have really come to enjoy and have served on a number of occasions.

Q So this is your favorite fish?

MRS. CLINTON: I really like it. I like the flavor and the texture of it.

We know that the Japanese eat a lot of fish. This is a menu that was shared with them and seems to be an appropriate one for the dinner.

Q And you are also breaking tradition by serving a red wine with fish.

MRS. CLINTON: It goes. You know, this is again something that seems to us to be appropriate. This particular wine, with the way the fish is being prepared, works.

Q You have a problem if there is a problem with the lobster and sausage.

MRS. CLINTON: It's been tried in various guises and approaches. I think it has got some surprise and personality to it.

Q This is very different from any other state dinner.

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MRS. CLINTON: You think so? Really?

Q Oh, yes. Well, I think it's probably the first time meat has not been served. Do you know whether that's true?

MRS. CLINTON: I don't know. I didn't have anybody research that.

Q And also the change in focus on the plate. I don't know how you achieve that when you are doing platters, how you achieve the change in proportion of vegetables.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, part of the reason that the main course will be plattered is we had found in the dinners we were doing, most of which were plattered, people choose. This is a new kind of -- as you point out, not everybody knows how to serve themselves. But some people know exactly what they want and are heavier on vegetables than anything else.

It's surprising how many people are, if not vegetarian these days, at least treading in that direction. So the main course on the platter gives people a chance to make their own decisions. So that's part of the reason --

Q But I wonder how it will signal that the vegetables are really meant to be the main part.

MRS. CLINTON: I don't know. We have done this several times with this kind of arrangement, and it seems to work well.

Q You are having dancing tonight?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, we are.

Q Does the Emperor dance?

MRS. CLINTON: I don't think so. I think that the Emperor usually excuses himself after the entertainment. At least that's the protocol schedule that we have been given. the entertainment is particularly chosen for him. It's Rostopovich. And he is a fan of Rostopovich. And it's the maestro's last week in Washington.

But then the dancing will follow what is scheduled

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to be the Emperor's and Empress's departure. And the dancing will be in the State Dining Room, which is also not totally new. Others have done that in the past, but it hadn't been done for a while.

Q Well, is red meat finished at the White House?

MRS. CLINTON: Absolutely not. Our last major dinner, the kind of state dinner with a small "s", for the President of South Korea, we served red meat.

Q Yes. That was an old (inaudible) chef.

MRS. CLINTON: We continue to do so. We have served on several occasions, at dinners, working lunches. And then our reception menu is particularly heavy on various kinds of red meat. Everything in moderation.

A PARTICIPANT: We need to get going.

Q Thank you so much.

I also want to tell you I can find better places for brunch than Sequoia for you.

MRS. CLINTON: Can you really?

Q Oh, yes.

MRS. CLINTON: We like it because we love the river.

Q The service is terrible.

MRS. CLINTON: But we just sit there and watch the river. It's so relaxing to us. My husband loves eating outside. You have any other --

Q There's Tabot and --

MRS. CLINTON: (Inaudible) Tabot, and we like that.

A PARTICIPANT: What about in Olde Towne? Any places in Olde Towne?

Q The (inaudible) which is certainly --

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I think you should go to one of the crab houses on the (inaudible) Creek. It is such fun.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, we'd love that. He loves to do that.

A PARTICIPANT: You should send us some of those names.

MRS. CLINTON: We would love that. You want to go with us?

Q I'd love to go with you.

MRS. CLINTON: Okay. We love crab.

Q Crabs and beer. These are just very local down-home places. Yes, I'd love to take you there.

MRS. CLINTON: That would be fun.

Can you give us the list --

Q Absolutely.

MRS. CLINTON: -- and driving distances? Because I would love to do that. We have not gotten out as much as we like. And we end up at the Sequoia after church all the time because my husband just loves the river.

Q Of course there's the old Anglers. As far as I know it's not on the river. It has a wonderful terrace, and it's very nice.

MRS. CLINTON: Good. I haven't been there.

Q I hope you have great fun tonight.

(Interruption to proceedings.)

MRS. CLINTON: -- formal, staid entertaining. But to have a little bit of life and newness and energy and give people a sense of both the tradition and the warmth.

Q There is probably one thing I read about you that really pleased me was coming (inaudible) that you wear

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suits. These are not (inaudible) suits. The colors and the shapes and the style.

A PARTICIPANT: See you later. See you tonight.

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