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ARGUS LEADER NEWSPAPER

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INTERVIEW OF THE FIRST LADY

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Q Mrs. Clinton, the Congressional Budget Office, Director Robert Reischauer, said that the Clinton plan will actually swell the budget by \$74 million instead of reducing like the (inaudible) plan.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, if you read the whole report, instead of the little snippets that some of the people who are opposed to the plan put out, you would know that the report concluded there would be a short-term increase with very large decreases, starting in the year 2000. And that in fact the plan would save business and the individuals even more money than we had proposed. There is no doubt about what the CBO concluded, that this plan will control cost and save money while covering everybody.

Q Just what is your reaction to what you have heard here today, and how will that affect what you will take back?

MRS. CLINTON: I thought that it was very helpful because what I heard validated what I have validated what I have heard all over the country: the problems in rural America are similar in North and South Dakota as they are in rural Texas or rural Alaska. But there are regional variations that we have to be aware of, and certain resources that we can call on to help provide better health care in rural communities.

So I was very impressed. I kept a list of all the issues that people raised today, and I learned some things. And I also am going to try to help some people. Like I told the young man from North Dakota, when my husband was governor of Arkansas, we faced the same problem with no ambulance service. And he worked out a deal to go and buy surplus military ambulances. And so I am going to put the senator and congressmen from North Dakota in touch with the White House, and we will try to help. So I have both learned

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things, and I hope I can help some, too.

Q Is that, perhaps, the most vivid picture that you bring back?

MRS. CLINTON: That's pretty vivid, you know. I mean, this poor young man, I had a chance to learn a little bit more about him. Having his arms amputated, having to use a pencil in his mouth to call Emergency -- that sticks in my mind. And I thought the point that his doctor made about how rural families are double disadvantaged, they can't afford insurance often. And then if they are in the system in some way they don't get the benefits that other workers get, is a very important one.

Q How about the clinic you were at this morning?

MRS. CLINTON: I was very impressed with that. I also like to see a physician assistant running a clinic like that, because as the nurse from Nebraska pointed out, too many states put barriers in the way of advanced practice nurses and physician assistants so that they cannot do what I saw this morning. And what I saw this morning, I thought was a very good program.

Q As you have travelled around the country since you first started, have you seen a change? Are people more informed, less informed, misinformed, enlightened --

MRS. CLINTON: All of the above. I think people are much more informed about a lot of (inaudible). I think that the vast majority of Americans now believe that there needs to be universal coverage, they now believe that we have to make significant changes in the insurance market. But I also think that there has been an effective campaign to spread misinformation like this argument that somehow the President's plan is going to take people's choice away, or that the President's plan is a government plan, neither of which is true.

The President's plan will guarantee choice, when right now people in Sioux Falls, I am told, are being told every day that their employer has switched insurance and they can no longer go to the doctor they used to go to. That's what they told me at the clinic this morning.

And, so, there is a lot of misinformation that

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unfortunately is being generated deliberately, and it's just our job to do things like this forum to get out and put the real facts out and then let people make up their own minds.

Q You, as an ambassador (inaudible), the lightening rod from health care, the administration (inaudible), how do you deal with that?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I really believe in what my husband is trying to do, and I really believe that this past year has proven to people that he means what he says. He said he would come in and try to have a responsible budget, and lower the deficit. And we did that. And I think the country is beginning to see it.

He also said he would come in and do national service, and that he would sign the Brady Bill and get it through the Congress. And so the things that he said, I think people know that he means. And I really -- I believe in him.

And so, what we are going to try to do this year, in terms of really cracking down on crime and beginning to reform the welfare system, and dealing with health care, are all issues he talked about in the campaign. They are all promises he made to try to do something about.

So I don't mind being a lightening rod. I'd rather be a lightening rod than be part of the massive denial we used to have where nobody wanted to face up to the fact that we had problems in our country. And I think we are a lot more confident and stronger because we are willing to deal with those problems.

Q And (inaudible), too, you have been in Norway, (inaudible), South Dakota. So, do you get to go home and sit back --

MRS. CLINTON: I am going to Wisconsin. As soon as I leave here, I am going to Wausau, Wisconsin, where I am going to do some more work on health care. And then I am going to spend the night in Milwaukee. And I'll get up in the morning, and make a speech about health care, and visit some places around Milwaukee. And then I'll be home tomorrow night.

Q Does that involve dinner at home with the family

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or --

MRS. CLINTON: Well --

Q Do you get to do that?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, yes, we do. We do nearly every night except when one of us isn't home. And that's one of the good things about living in the White House because my husband works so close to where we live. So he comes home for dinner most nights. Yes, that's what we will do, we will watch the olympics. That's what we have been doing every night since I got back and my daughter became big fans of all the young athletes we met. We called Dan Jansen on the plane on my way here because I learned when I was flying here that he had won the 1,000 meter speed skating. So we will be sitting there at home cheering everybody on.

Q I am curious to know as far as again parents, I know you have gone through this, did that bring you closer to the whole health care issue?

MRS. CLINTON: I think that there is nothing like the personal experience to rivet your attention on any issue. In my family, like every family that I have met, if you have had any experience with the health care system, the more sensitive to what the problems are that need to be fixed. And if you have aging parents, then you are much more sensitive to all the issues of long-term care, of prescription drugs, preserving health care for your parents or your grandparents. And it makes it hard, then, to think this is just some sort of abstract policy discussion.

I see the faces of the people that I have met and known. I will take the faces that I saw here today with me. I want to be able, when this is all done, to tell my mother it's okay, tell myself it is all right for us and our children, and to tell anybody I met on the road that this is going to be good for them. That's what I believe we are trying to do is to make this a better system.

Q One more question: When did you speak to the children in the school today --

MRS. CLINTON: You know what was really interesting and made a big impression on me, is that -- you know, I talked to them a little bit about how proud I was to be

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there, what a great sports program they had because I had learned that. But then I just said very few words about health care and told them they could ask me any question they wanted to. They asked more terrific questions about health care, very personal.

I remember one young man said, you know, "My mom works, and I work part-time, but my mom can't afford to insure me. How will that change in the President's plan?"

One little boy said, "My grandmother and grandfather spend \$6,000 a year for prescription drugs. What will happen to them under the President's plan?"

They asked real questions about their families. I was very impressed.

Q I don't suppose I get a chance at a refrigerator question?

MRS. CLINTON: Go ahead.

Q It's kind of a joke. At the Argus Leader we have a question and answer every Monday in our paper. Inevitably one question comes up: "Name three things that we have in the refrigerator." Always.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, always. All right. Diet Coke; Mountain Valley Water from Hot Springs, Arkansas; and skim milk.

Q And on that note (inaudible). They won't believe I asked that.

(The interview was concluded.)

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