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INTERVIEW OF THE FIRST LADY
BY MICHAEL KELLY

The West Wing

Q I think I have the rare and happy circumstance, of wanting to talk to you about something you want to talk about, which is one of those things in interviews that doesn't happen --

MRS. CLINTON: Okay.

Q -- that often. And so I'd like to, to the degree that we can take, to not make it that formal an interview, but to just have a conversation.

MRS. CLINTON: Sure.

Q And what I want to talk about is what you touched upon in your speech in Texas and the ideas in that speech. And I brought it with me, if you want.

MRS. CLINTON: Okay, great.

Q I was fascinated by the speech. And I felt that the ideas that you went into were so -- I say unusual, but I don't mean that in a bad sense -- but they were more philosophical and more reaching than you're used to hearing in speeches. And in talking to people I'm told that it's something you're thinking a good deal about. I talked to Michael Lerner, the other day, after he was here. He's somebody I've been talking to in the past about this sort of thing, and he said you were very serious about what he calls the politics of meaning. I saw you used a phrase of his in the speech, too.

Let me just start by asking you about the basic point that you raised in the Texas speech that we are at a point in our society where we have to do something beyond programmatic changes, something -- I think you used the phrase remolding society, redefining it. If you can just start by talking about what you have in mind there.

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MRS. CLINTON: Okay. This is something I've thought about for many years.

Q Yes. I've gathered that.

MRS. CLINTON: And I've given lots of speeches about it. None of them obviously with this kind of attention because I was never in a position to get this sort of attention. It's really something that goes back to even my incoherent, but heartfelt commencement speech at Wellesley. And it is something that Bill and I have talked about ever since we started talking in 1971. And I think it's partly because there are a lot of forces converging all at the same time. I just want to talk about it. If I use up all your time, we'll do some more, okay? Because this is real important to me, okay.

Q Use up all the time you want to.

MRS. CLINTON: And I'm not real articulate about it because it's something that we're also searching for a vocabulary.

Q That's the sense I got in this speech.

MRS. CLINTON: If you look historically where we are -- not just the United States, but the West -- and I'd include even the industrialized Asian countries like Japan, to a large extent -- Singapore, South Korea, to a lesser extent, of course -- we can see the divergence between the two major theories that have been tried to maximize people's happiness, well-being and affluence. Certainly, the kind of statused approach exemplified most dramatically by the communists, but to a lesser degree by the socialists, the social democrats, the kind of rapid industrialization and growth in European countries, and particularly Scandinavian countries, which brought high levels of well-being to many, many people, higher than would have been possible in perhaps any other approach.

Then the more market-driven economies and governments to support that, exemplified, obviously, most dramatically by the United States, but you've got Canada, Australia, you've got others as well. And it strikes me that the collapse of communism and the kind of distress that you're seeing beginning to pop out in Europe over how do we keep people employed in the face of fast technological change, how do we afford the social services that we want to give to people -- is matched, to some degree in this country where we say we've had 12 years of the most intense kind of market-oriented politics, some of it being a natural correction, which I give that to those who advocate that position -- but the bottom line for me is that neither the market alone, nor the state alone is an adequate instrument for

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creating a sense of meaning and purpose in either an individual's life or in a community's life.

And what is the great struggle right now for those people like Michael Lerner and Havel and others who are trying to push the boundaries of political discourse, is how to recreate a situation in which we really recognize the incapacity of both of those purist approaches and, in America at least, come up with a new kind of political dialogue which is related to the new realities that we're facing at the end of the 20th century.

And it's a struggle because none of us is particularly articulate about it. My husband often made a stab at it, you know, with his new covenant speeches in Georgetown and other speeches throughout the campaign -- and maybe would get hammered for it because it sounded like he was trying to be all things on both sides, or this and that approach when, in effect, I think that's what we have to struggle for. Because you're not going to find meaning in either your economic life or in your political life alone, but your economic life and your political life can support conditions in which it is more likely. People can be responsible enough to engage in defining who they are, not only individually, but in relation to a community in a more productive and positive way.

So, for example, we both advocate welfare reform, not because we want to be punitive or point fingers at people, but because in the absence of the eventual abolition of that kind of dependency, you can't expect a whole group of people to have the economic and political conditions that will enable them to be responsible. And that, to me, is the first step towards seeking and finding meaning in your own life.

Does that make sense?

Q It does, but it brings you immediately to one of the central truths about this whole discussion that's been going on for years, and the case of welfare reform is a good example. When Pat Moynihan first started talking about the fact that welfare was creating a pathology of victims rather than its intended laudable effect of bringing people out of poverty, he was, as you remember, excoriated.

And that dialogue hasn't really changed in 25 years. But it is still regarded as a liberal position to say the state must spend the money to take care of these people, and the state should not be in the business of trying to affect their moral behavior by withdrawing money. And it is still a conservative, it seems to me, position to say, no, the way people behave is dependent to some degree on the state, and when the state gives people a series of

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incentives to behave in a certain way, since people are driven by rational impulses, they do behave in that way.

I appreciate what you are talking about, but I wonder, and I assume you have thought about how you can conceivably change a dialogue to remove tags of liberalism and conservatism that have been there for three generations, four generations.

MRS. CLINTON: That's what we are trying to do, and it is very hard. Let's take two examples. Take the welfare example. Both of the so-called positions you've just described accurately describe the polls; both of them are inadequate descriptions. On the one hand, it is self-evident that the system as it currently exists is a disaster. On the other, it is, to me, though, equally self-evident that merely changing incentives within that system is only part of what has to occur.

You cannot very well move people from welfare to work when you don't have some employment possibilities that are available for those people. But you do have to begin by changing the system that you've got. And that's one of the reasons why, in this health care effort, I'm so intent upon doing what I can to provide universal coverage to all Americans, and to remove the incentive for people to stay on welfare as opposed to taking a job without benefits because their children will have medical coverage, which is exactly what happens now.

But on the other hand, I recognize that even if we're able to accomplish what may be one of the biggest steps toward welfare reform through the health care -- and I've talked to Senator Moynihan about that -- so that we level the playing field on the health care issue, then we still are going to have to use the right kind of government assistance to take people who are second or third generation welfare dependents and equip them to be functioning in the world. And we want to do that in an efficient, cost-effective way, but we have to recognize that part of the reason they're in the position they're in is because of a government program. I mean, it's a vicious circle.

Q But let me go beyond welfare for a second and talk -- cite three quick sort of vignettes, or whatever, of society. My wife went to do a story about a year ago on a public school in Chicago that claimed to have successfully grappled with an epidemic of teenage pregnancy -- 60 percent, 70 percent of the class -- the girls in each graduating senior class were pregnant every year. And when she got there and talked to the people who ran the school -- and this is run with the blessing of the state, as it were -- she found that what they meant by having grappled with it was that they had provided day care. But they still have 50 percent to 60 percent --

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they provided day care and some educational classes -- but they still had 50 to 60 percent of these girls having babies and then having the endless life sentence that that entails.

That's one thing. Another thing is, there was a piece in The Washington Post, I don't know, a week or so ago, local story about the extraordinary rise in students, not just poor students, but children of doctors and so on, who curse their teachers out.

MRS. CLINTON: I saw that. I saw that.

Q Fascinating. And a third thing that sticks in my mind -- my father was talking to a young woman who works in his office not long ago who is weepy because she had been dumped by some fellow that she was working with. And the guy had sort of taken her out and they had a nice time and things had progressed and after they had been going out for a couple weeks or months and she decided she was in love, he mentioned that, by the way, he had a fiance in Baltimore or something.

And my father -- the great difference is that when I was that young man's age -- I might have wanted to do that same thing, but in my society if I had done that twice, the society I lived in would have come down on me like a ton of bricks. They would have driven my out of society, because it was understood that young men were not supposed to behave as they used to say, "like cads."

And the point, obviously, that I'm getting at is that I wonder what government can do in these things, and that it seems to me and you suggest in this speech that you were talking about something far more profound, a societal change.

MRS. CLINTON: Right. Absolutely. Well, I think that there has to be a reaffirmation of responsible behavior rooted in what I view as a value system in which people respect one another and in which they care for each other, that has to be both from the bottom up and exemplified and encouraged from the top down. I mean, it is not an either/or situation for me. And there are a lot of ways of doing that that we haven't done.

One of the best expressions of the kind of dilemma we find ourselves in is a piece that the Catholic bishops published a year or two ago, which was their children and family policy. I've quoted it a lot in the last year or two because they made the point, which I agree with, that the family values debate was off target. That children are the result of both their family values and their society's values. And what I've tried to figure out how to do is how do we begin to talk in a way that encourages more people to be responsible and to do what your father said was sort of taken for

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granted, in the face of disintegrating intermediary structures -- family, the neighborhood, the church. The kind of social institutions that would have supported the shunning of that young man that your father described, they have been under so much stress that they themselves need to be rebuilt to take their rightful place as the arbiters of values and as the inculcators of values.

And so we've got work on three fronts, all of which are massive. We've got work on the individual personal responsibility front. We've got work on the intermediary sort of civil society front, that I talked about in that speech, and on the governmental. And all of those should be reinforcing each other instead of, as has happened too often in the past, undermining one another or rendering each other irrelevant.

You know, for example, the story that your wife did. We've had a more positive experience -- we've had both good news and bad news in Arkansas on teenage pregnancy. We've had a more positive experiences where we've confronted the problem, had decision-making seminars for young women, giving them the courage to say no, tried to reach out to young men and talk about the real lack of responsibility that their sexual behavior and their becoming irresponsible fathers indicated; using these school-based clinics with parental permission to talk about things that are very difficult for people to discuss. So we've seen some good dropping in things like teenage pregnancy in some areas.

On the other hand, when you've got a high divorce rate, when you've got parents who don't fulfill their basic responsibilities to their own children, who set bad examples, who are not held in check by an extended family or by a church network or a neighborhood, it's very hard to alter the kind of behavior. And then when you've got government programs that, no matter how you cut it, reinforce teenage pregnancy by providing a substandard, but nevertheless, level of payment for that, you've got too many conflicting signals.

Q And a financial disincentive to get married.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, and a financial disincentive to get married -- the financial disincentive then to get off because you don't get child care or education or medical care if you do. You know, we've got all these wrong signals going.

So that part of what we've got to struggle with is how to get all our signals straight. And we have left it to the fundamentalist religious community to try to sound the clarion call about values. But they've done so in a very divisive way. I happen to think that much of the motivation of the people I know in that

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community is commendable. I mean, I've struggled hard years ago to make sure that religious parents have the right to home-school their children in Arkansas. I took a lot of heat from the education establishment about that and I would turn to anybody who argued with me and I'd say, why on earth would you want to tell parents who are willing to put that kind of time into their own children they shouldn't do it?

So I am very supportive of a lot of the impetus for concern that comes out of that community. But I regret that it is done in a either-or, us and them, divisive way because I much prefer the Catholic bishops' approach on these issues in which they say it is not an either-or, it is a societal and a family responsibility.

So I think it was in that speech where I talked about how when you think about how government has failed in it's basic responsibilities to keep our street safe, when you can't as a mother in a housing project let your child go out and play if you want your child to be sure to survive, you can have the greatest values in America -- you can be a mother who believes in hard work, who believes in getting her children educated, who gets on a bus and goes to a job 50 miles away to support your children or whatever you do, and yet you can't provide the basic safety the child needs to live.

Q One of the reasons that I think that a conservative approach to this failed to find a wide audience in the last election and in the last several years is not because there isn't a wide audience for these views. I think there is vast agreement.

MRS. CLINTON: A very wide and hopefully growing.

Q And I would bet that this is the great political issue of the near future, that if you talk to people so often what they are concerned about is not Washington's concerns, but, you know, kids who act like gangsters, even nice girls. You know, they go on and on about it.

MRS. CLINTON: That's right.

Q But there is a fundamental problem, it seems to me, in sort of the American psyche here that you face, too, which is that even when people agree with the preacher, they don't like being preached at. Americans have an extreme ambivalence towards anything that smacks of moralism, and what you're talking about are morals. You're talking about remaking society to pay more attention to and more fealty to Judeo-Christian ethics, and that courses of action are not value neutral; that not everything is equally the same -- that choosing to have a baby when you are unmarried and 17 is not the same

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neutral value as choosing not to. It's damages -- it's self-destructive to society.

When people try that in our society, try to talk about that sort of thing, they are mocked, they are scorned. Sometimes there are people, for instance, in the case of Dan Quayle, it's easy to mock. But nevertheless, part of the mocking is not just because they are easy to mock, it's because there is a reflexive, I think, attitude, maybe it's cynicism -- I don't know -- but where Americans say, I'll go and listen to the preacher once a week on Sunday with an eye to the door and that's about it. I'm not going to take it from the White House.

MRS. CLINTON: No, but there are two pieces of this that I think are equally important. First is that I don't want to be just talking in a moralistic term because that's not what I mean to be doing. I mean to be trying to participate in what the values debate is that goes on around dinner tables. People are talking about this and if they -- it's an irony that what is talked about at the dinner table is somehow viewed as unwelcome in the larger political discourse. And I want there to be more of a match there. I think part of the reason our politics got kind of off course in the last decade or two is that the voices of what was really concerning people was not matched by what they heard coming out of their political leadership. We need to get a better match.

Secondly, we need to match words and deeds. I don't think it is right to preach at people. I think it is important to engage people in a conversation, because much of what I hope we can talk about is not just about morals and values but lies at the self-interest of the vast majority of Americans.

This is not a religious argument, although much of my motivation for it comes from my own religious views and beliefs. But putting that to one side, this is a conversation about how are we living, and how do we expect to live in a more productive, responsible way with one another. And if all one does is preach and point fingers, it's easy for most Americans who have a pretty good smell detector about this to say, yes, right, give me a break. But if you can begin to try to match deeds and words so that there is a coherence to your beliefs that you're putting forth, then you can gain some credibility that is deserved and to have that conversation.

I mean, for too long the rhetoric of the right on this issue and some of the spokespeople for that rhetoric -- it was so crass. They were pandering. It was a bone thrown to people. I mean, one of the biggest surprises to me in getting to Washington is how so many of these issues that have been talked about for the last 12 years were basically denied and ignored. I mean, you'd go out and

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make a speech about it, but you wouldn't have a policy, God forbid, to try to change it. So the hypocrisy at the root of this preaching with no deeds, following the words, should make people cynical.

If we can get a coherent conversation and then policy and words and deeds flows from that, then we won't make all the progress overnight we need to make, but there will be a shared vision that is connected to values, that people will be able to share in and see progress being made toward. That's my hope.

I mean, what I want is for the kinds of concerns that my friends talk to me about -- we had dinner with two of our friends who just moved out of a big city -- I won't name it; I don't want to malign any city -- they just moved out of a big city to a smaller town, because they found that their high school daughter was basically being shunned because she had a curfew, she was not permitted to go out and run wild with the other kids, she couldn't -- she wasn't permitted to go to dance clubs and stay out until 2:00 a.m. or 3:00 a.m. in the morning. And she was being basically made fun of for being a good kid.

Now, it is not government's fault that the parents of those other kids are letting their kids engage in behavior and court dangers that they are not emotionally or psychologically prepared to do. It is not the government's fault that affluent parents in this society drop their 10, 11, and 12-year-olds off at the mall; that let their 13 and 14 and 15-year-olds go off to places that they've never met the parents of the kids, they've never met the kids or anything like that. That is a failure on the part of the adult community to care for our children. And, yes, it's dangerous ground for me or anybody else to walk on, because you're basically saying at all levels of society, we are abdicating our responsibility to our children. Children need structure and routine and adult guidance. And in many parts of our society right now -- and not just in the poor places that are easy to point fingers at -- they are not getting that.

Now, maybe if we can get that conversation going so that a lot of adults who feel bewildered by their own lives right now -- they're back in the dating market because they've been dumped by their spouse and they don't even know how to take care of themselves, let alone pay attention to a needy 14-year-old -- they can maybe slow down long enough to say, now, what's really at stake here? What is my primary responsibility? And that is hard. And it is something that a lot of people don't want to think about.

Q It's very hard. I think if you go down this road, as you clearly intend to and want to -- and I think that the things you are saying make a lot of sense personally -- that I think you can

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expect to be accused of being a preacher, of being a blue stocking. And, you know, we treat blue stockings with a certain -- the blue stockings of Boston were the sound of the cry that ultimately freed the slaves, but they never got the respect for it.

MRS. CLINTON: But, you know, Michael, I view it differently. I am not in any way deterred by the fact that I might be ridiculed or made fun of. That doesn't bother me at all, because that's irrelevant to me. I know -- no matter what I did, if I did nothing, if I spent my entire day totally disengaged from what is going on in the world around me, I'd be criticized for that. I mean, it's, I guess, a no-win deal, no matter what I do or try to do. But from my perspective, there are millions of people who are worried about the same things I'm worried about. I don't care who gets the credit. I don't care who has to be criticized in order to move this conversation forward.

I told somebody the other day that -- I want to live in a place again where I can walk down any street without being afraid. I want to be able to take my daughter to a park at any time of day or night in the summertime and remember what I used to be able to do when I was a little kid. You know, my parents -- sometimes we'd take a blanket and we'd lie out under the stars in a park. Nobody would be willing to do that in today's world.

Q Let me pick up right on that point. And this is where -- and I absolutely agree with you, but this is where it becomes instantly non-post-ideological, where it seems to me the -- I have always wanted to believe in the notion of going beyond the left-right debate, but it always keep going back to it. If you want that park the way you want, if you want Farragut Square two blocks from here to be that way, that means that as a practical course, what you have to do is remove the five or six or seven scary looking, dangerous-appearing men who live in that park.

They may not be dangerous, but they scare mothers with children. They are frightening. They smell bad; they pee in the bushes, et cetera, et cetera. That's why mothers don't take children to parks. And that is happening all over the country. To remove them, you run right up against a liberal precept that says those people, the homeless have a right to be in that park. We have no right to impose our desires on them. Our rights don't take precedence over theirs. And that's a flat contradiction.

MRS. CLINTON: But, see, I think that's wrong on two counts. I happen to agree with Senator Moynihan that some of the reasons some of the people are in the park is because of a government policy. When we began to deinstitutionalize mentally-ill people and we failed on the other half of that promise, which was to create

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community-based alternatives, we created this problem to some extent.

Secondly, when we have abdicated the kind of public health responsibility that I think we ought to be revitalizing, so that we have not yet figured out how, with a number of people who are emotionally disturbed, psychiatrically sick, but they only come in for sporadic treatment and we have no conditions attached to that, but the government keeps shelling out the money for the treatment, the government takes them in the emergency acute wards when they are brought in, you and I pay for that -- we have a right to ask something in return. We have to get back to the sense of mutual obligation.

Now, a person who is on medication, a person who is able to function appropriately is not likely to be in the condition that a lot of these people are who are homeless, but mentally-ill homeless, in that category. Because usually you'll find those are the street sleepers.

Q Absolutely. The problem isn't that they don't have a home, their problem is what they carried with them to get to the point where they're sleeping on doorsteps.

MRS. CLINTON: That's right. And I think that this argument that all rights are in some way paramount to responsibilities is just dead wrong. I've been writing about this since 1973, struggling with how you impose both rights and responsibilities. And to me, we as a society have a right to ask for responsibility, and we have an obligation to provide alternatives so that people can either be given an opportunity to develop more responsibility or be taken care of.

So these are debates that we are shying away from because they're hard debates. I mean, there's no easy answer to it.

Q No, these are the debates in which people get called names and tempers rise and so on.

MRS. CLINTON: That's right. But I think that it is time -- I mean, I guess my biggest concern is the level of denial that we have lived with in our society for a number of years now, in which on both a social level and a political level we have acted as though if we just ignored a lot of these problems, somebody somewhere would fix them, or else we would learn to live with them.

Again, I go back to Senator Moynihan because I think he's got a broad view of history and an ability to see into the future. And he argues very convincingly in his recent article about defining down deviancy -- that what we have, in effect, done is to

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get used to more and more deviant behavior around us because we haven't wanted to deal with it. It isn't going to be easy, and we are all going to be called names.

Q But some behavior is deviant.

MRS. CLINTON: By gosh, it is deviant. It is deviant if you have any set of standards by which you expect to be judged.

Q A set of standards is precisely what, forgive me I should use the phrase which is sometimes applied to myself, but which the intellectual elite in this country, the current fad argues against; that there is not a universal set of standards, that what dead white males have imposed in the past or what this religion or that religion says is not -- does not hold true for everyone and that we should all be free to act as we please.

MRS. CLINTON: But I think that is a theoretical and, to a great extent, an elitist argument. I think a person would have a hard time making that argument to the kind of people that I know who are working hard and living in fear and are really taking the brunt of a lot of the social and political decisions that we've either made or failed to make in the last 20 years.

There are standards; we live by them, we recognize them, we reward them. And it is a real fallacy to jump from what we do in our individual and work lives to expect us not to have standards in our social/community lives. We do. We operate on them all the time.

Q Yes, and they are, in fact, religion-based standards. I mean, they are the standards of the Bible. They are the standards of "thou shalt not." That's what we base our friendships and families on.

MRS. CLINTON: That's right. But even if we bring it down to -- in nearly every religion I'm aware of there is a variation of the Golden Rule. That cuts across every religion. And even for the non-religious it is a tenet of people who believe in humanistic principles.

We could do a lot worse than saying we should begin to think about how to treat each other in a more respectful way. And that means would we let whole sections of our cities be like Beirut? Would we want that to be the place we would live in with our children? Of course not. Well, then what would be reasonable policies to pursue in order to avoid that? Would we want young children to be exposed to a lot of the dangers that might lead to drug addiction or abuse or violence, or all of the problems that we

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face if there were ways we could band together as adults to help them avoid that. We much would prefer that.

I think if we pose the choices instead of talking about them as some kind of standard to which everybody should apply, but instead talk about them in what we understand as self-interested good decisions that are more likely to lead to a good outcome for individuals than a bad one, we can maybe strip it down and say to people, put yourself into that other person's position. What is a decision that is made more likely to lead to a healthy or more productive outcome?

Q Did you see Myron Magnet's the new book, The Dream and the Nightmare?

MRS. CLINTON: No.

Q I haven't -- speaking classically as a Washingtonian I'm now going to speak -- I haven't read it, but I've read the reviews. And he argues that two things happened in the '60's and the early '70's at the same time. One was a great revolution in rights that was a tremendous step forward for society, that people who had genuinely been oppressed became, to an extraordinary degree in the space of only a couple of generations, unoppressed and much less oppressed, and that this was hailed as a positive good and it was a positive good. But at the same time, and in the same name, that is in the name of liberal precepts, something else was going on which was a vast loosening of responsibilities, of the way we expected people to behave and the way we, indeed, punished them if they did not behave. And that was also a liberal notion, and that that second strain of liberalism defeated the first.

That the reason you have this great pathology at the center of the city, for instance, is not because you made it easier for people to advance up the rungs of the social ladder, which happened in the '60's, but because you told them, do what you want, there are no rules anymore, we liberalized everything, we liberalized divorce, we liberalized society's rules against having children without being married, against all sorts of sexual behavior, against drugs and crime and so on. And he argues that this amounts to the great failure of that part of liberalism and it is that that has brought us to the condition that we're in and we have to reject that.

I didn't mean to go on so long.

MRS. CLINTON: But, see, I think oftentimes the debate in liberalism, and I think there is a debate, is talked about to the exclusion of the debate in conservatism, which was running along the same tracks. And I think we have to see both of those internal

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debates to understand the strength and weaknesses of that kind of analysis.

It is true that the movement toward rights and the assertion of the rightful place in society of all kinds of people, within the American historical context, was a big step forward and one to be largely applauded. It is also true that at the same time, there was all kinds of pressures that loosened people's sense of responsibilities, that were not just liberally -- not just a liberal's argument, there were other pressures. There were explosions of cultural and information and other kinds of things working at the same time, the unexplored but I think profound impact of television on people which was neither liberal nor conservative but a fact. So all of that is going on.

But there was also at the same time a strain within what would be called liberalism that argued strongly for empowerment, argued strongly for creating conditions in which responsibility was more likely to flourish. I mean the argument behind something like Head Start is that it will create more responsible, productive people. You've got people like Saul O'Linsky who argued from the very beginning that you needed an empowerment strategy which the establishment would see as very liberal but which in many ways bucked up against a government sense of liberalism. So you have that debate. At the same time you have this debate in so-called conservatism in which a lot of support for intermediary institution was considered irrelevant to promoting the increasing dominance of the marketplace in people's lives.

I mean, it used to be when I was growing up that a Republican and a conservative would be the more likely person to stand up and argue against the encroachment of business interests in the environment for example. That all began to be blown away. So the argument within conservatism in which you had a tension but it was a much less visible a tension -- it was currently going on.

And really, if you take those four quadrants, what we're trying to do is to draw the strains from each that make sense to help recreate, as Michael Lerner and I were talking, first a language in which we can better communicate what we're trying to say, and then policies that would flow from those languages. So that it becomes impossible easily to label something.

Like, you know, when the President unveils his national service proposal on Friday, is that liberal or conservative, or is that labeling irrelevant? I mean, is it an attempt both to instill more individual responsibility and to fulfill community needs, which draws from all four of those quadrants?

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Yes, there are rights for people who have to go to college, but they will have to be, therefore, better prepared to be more functioning citizens and they will be able to participate in the marketplace. But they will be doing so in a very kind of conservative approach to keeping this whole structure going.

So that's what the dilemma to me is. How do we get beyond that?

Q It's sort of a unified field theory of --

MRS. CLINTON: That's a great phrase. That's a great phrase. That's right. Exactly right. Because I think that's how we have to see it. I mean, one of the people who influenced me a lot in this is Havel. I've read all of his stuff and I had more of him in mind when I gave that Austin speech. I wasn't acquainted -- I know who Michael Lerner was; I'd never met him before, but I knew that he and others are all struggling with this. But I was thinking more about Havel's discussion about how we need more understanding. It's not any longer sufficient to be able to describe problems and to delineate the 10 or 15 ideological arguments. We need more understanding that gets to a deeper level, gets to this meaning level about what it is we're trying to achieve for people.

But the unified -- that's an excellent way of talking about it because that's really what we're looking for. And I think -- this goes way beyond any knowledge that I have, but it fits in with what's happening in science and in the arts; to a lesser extent, in business and in journalism and in a lot of other professions where people are beginning to understand that you need a broader view in order to understand the particular better. That it is no longer sufficient to pluck something out, hold it up to the light of day and think you understand it. You need to have some unified field theory against which you measure your perceptions and understand what it is you see. So I'll give you credit for it, but I'm going to steal it. That's wonderful. That's wonderful.

Q Let me, if I may, ask you a couple quick questions before we leave then, on health care.

MRS. CLINTON: Could we see Michael again?

Q I would love to.

MRS. CLINTON: Why don't we do that. Because you've really helped me think about a lot of this stuff. I hope you don't mind that I've --

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Q No, this is exactly what I was hoping for. I would like to just ramble on. And you're very nice, you don't interrupt me when I blather, so I enjoy it.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, your blathering is music to my ears. (Laughter.)

Q That's great.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, we'll set up something else. Now I've got to read about unified field theory.

Q One quick news question before I go, just because it's up and my editors asked me to. The health plan, the talk in recent days about pushing it back -- is there any possibility of that?

MRS. CLINTON: No. We are still proceeding as -- I mean, the enormity of the task and particularly the reconciling of all the numbers -- because I told the Senate Finance Committee when I met with them -- Republicans and Democrats -- last week that I am not going to present something to the President until I'm sure that we have numbers that will withstand analysis.

You may not want -- like the policy that derives from the numbers, but the numbers have to be good. And frankly, the task of getting the various pieces of the federal government in one room to agree on all the numbers has been very difficult. So we have made a lot of progress.

Then we've got a team of outside actuaries and economists and we're going to be looking at those. So we are working as hard as we can. There's no delaying what we're doing. But we want it to be right.

Q The schedule is on the same --

MRS. CLINTON: The schedule so far --

Q Do you worry at all about the possibility that some of the political minds have raised that pushing forward now with something that is going to raise the specter of new costs, new taxes and so on will be counterproductive politically, and it's better to wait until next year since it --

MRS. CLINTON: I disagree with that very strongly. And I think that the President is on record as urging that we get health care this year. And we're going to do everything we can to try to make that happen.

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Q Thank you.

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