

will be tabloid nirvana. And look—just what happened—

The President. I tried to spare the country that. That's the only reason that we asked the Supreme Court to affirm that, absent some terrible emergency, the President shouldn't be subject to suits, so that he wouldn't become a political target. They made a different decision. And they have made the decision that this was good for the country. So I'm taking it and dealing with it the best I can.

Independent Counsel's Investigation

Mr. Lehrer. And the new thing, you're going to be, you know, pour it on, nothing is going to change?

The President. I have got to go to work every day. You know, whatever people say about me, whatever happens to me, I can't say that people didn't tell me they were going to go after me because they thought I represented a new direction in American politics and they thought we could make things better. And I can't say that they haven't been as good as their word—every day, you know, just a whole bunch of them trying to make sure that gets done. But I just have to keep working at it.

I didn't come here for money or power or anything else. I came here to spend my time, do my job, and go back to my life. That's all I want to do. And that's what I'm trying to do for the best interests of America. And so far, the results have been good, and I just hope the people will keep that in mind.

Mr. Lehrer. Mr. President, thank you very much.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at 3:30 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. It was videotaped for evening broadcast on Public Broadcasting Service television stations nationwide. In his remarks, the President referred to Monica Lewinsky, former White House intern and subject of Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr's newly expanded investigation; President Fidel Castro of Cuba; Richard Butler, chairman, United Nations Special Commission; and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Excerpt of a Telephone Interview With Morton Kondrake and Ed Henry of Roll Call

January 21, 1998

Independent Counsel's Investigation

Mr. Henry. Hello, Mr. President, this is Ed Henry. How are you?

The President. Hi, Ed.

Mr. Kondrake. A few questions about the breaking news. Do you think that this Monica Lewinsky story is going to overshadow your State of the Union Address?

The President. Well, I hope not. But you guys will have to make that decision. The press will make that decision.

Mr. Henry. Some Republicans have been talking about impeachment for months now. And even your former adviser George Stephanopoulos mentioned it this morning, that it could lead to that. What is your reaction to the suggestion that this may lead to impeachment?

The President. Well, I don't believe it will. I'm going to cooperate with this investigation. And I made it very clear that the allegations are not true. I didn't ask anybody not to tell the truth. And I'll cooperate. So I think that there will be a lot of stirring and there will be a lot of speculation about how this all was done and what it means and what it portends, and you all will handle it however you will. I'm just going to go back to work and do the best I can.

Mr. Kondrake. Do you think you have to refer to it in some way in the speech on Tuesday?

The President. I've given no thought to that, no.

Mr. Henry. Will this cloud your ability to get anything done with this Congress as you head into the new session?

The President. Well, that will be up to them. I don't think so. It's election year; they'll want to get some things done, too. And we've got a lot to do. I'm going to give them the first balanced budget, 3 years ahead of time, and a great child care initiative and an important Medicare initiative. We've got a Medicare commission meeting. We're going to be able to actually see this budget balanced and start to run a little surplus. We've

got a lot of things to do around the world, so I think this is quite important.

Mr. Kondrake. Okay. Let me just ask you one more question about this. You said in a statement today that you had no improper relationship with this intern. What exactly was the nature of your relationship with her?

The President. Well, let me say, the relationship's not improper, and I think that's important enough to say. But because the investigation is going on and because I don't know what is out—what's going to be asked of me, I think I need to cooperate, answer the questions, but I think it's important for me to make it clear what is not. And then, at the appropriate time, I'll try to answer what is. But let me answer, it is not an improper relationship, and I know what the word means. So let's just—

Mr. Kondrake. Was it in any way sexual?

The President. The relationship was not sexual. And I know what you mean, and the answer is no.

NOTE: The interview began at 4:26 p.m. The President spoke from the Oval Office at the White House.

Interview With Mara Liasson and Robert Siegel of National Public Radio

January 21, 1998

Independent Counsel's Investigation

Mr. Siegel. Mr. President, welcome to the program.

Many Americans woke up to the news today that the Whitewater independent counsel is investigating an allegation that you, or you and Vernon Jordan, encouraged a young woman to lie to lawyers in the Paula Jones civil suit. Is there any truth to that allegation?

The President. No, sir, there's not. It's just not true.

Mr. Siegel. Is there any truth to the allegation of an affair between you and the young woman?

The President. No, that's not true, either. And I have told people that I would cooperate in the investigation, and I expect to cooperate with it. I don't know any more about it than I've told you and any more about it

really than you do, but I will cooperate. The charges are not true, and I haven't asked anybody to lie.

Ms. Liasson. Mr. President, where do you think this comes from? Did you have any kind of relationship with her that could have been misconstrued?

The President. Mara, I'm going to do my best to cooperate with the investigation. I want to know what they want to know from me. I think it's more important for me to tell the American people that there wasn't improper relations; I didn't ask anybody to lie; and I intend to cooperate. And I think that's all I should say right now, so I can get back to the work of the country.

Ms. Liasson. But you're not able to say whether you had any conversations with her about her testimony, any conversations at all?

The President. I think, given the state of this investigation, it would be inappropriate for me to say more. I've said everything I think that I need to say now. I'm going to be cooperative, and we'll work through it.

Mr. Siegel. But is the fact that in this case, as we understand it, a close friend of this young woman was outfitted with a wire, with a microphone to record conversations with her at the instruction of the Whitewater counsel, does that disturb you? Do you regard that Mr. Starr is playing the inquisitor here in this case?

The President. Well, that's a question the American people will have to ask and answer, and the press will have to ask and answer, the bar will have to ask and answer. But it's inappropriate for me to comment on it at this time. I just have to cooperate, and I'll do that.

Scrutiny of the Presidency

Mr. Siegel. And a broader question. I understand that you don't want to comment on this. There are some commentators—on our network, it would be Kevin Phillips, who said that the moral leadership of the Presidency justifies the kind of scrutiny that you're receiving. Do you agree with that?

The President. Well, I think there is a lot of scrutiny, and there should be, and I think that's important. I'll leave it to others to define whether the kind we have received