

body told me he responded to some questions—somebody putting the question to him—and he said, well, maybe it would have some utility. There has been no formal proposal by the French Government to its coalition partners.

Q. Mr. President, if at the meeting on the 9th there seems to be progress being made but is not finished, would you delay resorting to the use of force while these talks continue?

The President. That is a little hypothetical for me to respond, and I'm not going to take any hypothetical questions on this because I don't want to show any deviation from the coalition's determination to see these United Nations [resolutions] fully implemented.

*Republican National Committee
Chairmanship*

Q. In that case, since you couldn't take the hypothetical question, can you I ask you if you want Clayton Yeutter to head the RNC?

The President. He'd be very good, wouldn't he?

Economic Outlook

Q. Mr. President, on the economy for a second, with today's latest unemployment numbers, how serious do you think the recession is, and what specifically are you doing about it?

The President. I think the answer is that most people that have looked at the economy feel that the recession—should it be proved technically that this country is in recession—will be shallow. It will be not a deep recession. And wait and see what our proposals are for the economy in the State of the Union message.

Persian Gulf Crisis

Q. Mr. President, is Secretary Baker prepared to discuss with Tariq 'Aziz further steps on the Arab-Israeli issue—the Palestinian issue?

The President. No, I don't think he's prepared to do that.

Q. So, he'll just listen to anything he might have to say, but not—

The President. You'd have to ask him how he plans to conduct the meeting. But he

is going to conduct the meeting within the confines of the United Nations resolutions. And to do something different would be not in accord with what the coalition partners, including this one, wants to see happen.

Q. Are you more optimistic now about the chances for peace, now that there is a meeting set up?

The President. I haven't gotten pessimistic about it. But time is going on here, and the coalition remains united in every way on these U.N. resolutions. But I think you'd have to view this as a positive step, yes. I was pleased that the proposal has been accepted.

Q. You say it's a positive step. Do you think that finally Saddam Hussein is starting to get the message, or not?

The President. Well, I don't think he has gotten the message and, of course, the purpose here is that he do get the message. So, let's hope that it will work. I will say, just to be realistic about it, that there have been many meetings with Saddam Hussein, many meetings with Tariq 'Aziz, and heretofore the message has not been gotten. But Jim Baker is quite persuasive. He is a man of great conviction on this question. And I think that this represents a real opportunity for the Iraqis to understand how serious this coalition partner is about seeing these resolutions fully implemented.

Federal Reserve Board Vacancy

Q. Mr. President, do you expect to fill the Fed vacancy soon, and will it be Larry Lindsey?

The President. The answer to the question is: yes, and I don't know—two-pronged question.

Persian Gulf Crisis

Q. Mr. President, would you look without favor on a trip to Baghdad by some other members of the coalition right now, say a European representative?

The President. Look, these coalition members are free to do whatever they want. Several have gone to Baghdad, I believe. I'd have to think back to the actual members of the coalition—representatives of governments there. I know there's a French representative there right now, I believe. So,