

that these things have nothing to do with the controversy?

The President. Well, let me tell you, you are assuming something that has not been proved. No discrepancies have been established. Now, we were all concerned, as we have all said, that we kept hearing all these reports after we got here that there were problems with the Travel Office. It turns out there were problems with the Travel Office, and they were serious. An accounting firm said they were serious. Those have been corrected. The American people should feel good about that. We also said—Mr. McLarty did, who was then the Chief of Staff, undertook his own review and said the matter wasn't handled well and detailed why. There have been something like seven reviews of the Travel Office.

So I would dispute your characterization. An allegation is not the same thing as a fact. And particularly, I would remind the American people, when it comes to the whole Whitewater issue, the allegations have often—matter of fact, virtually always borne no relationship to the facts. That's really the story of this for the last 4 years. An allegation comes up, and we answer it. And then people say, "Well, here's another allegation. Answer this." And then, "Here's another allegation. Answer this." That is the way we are living here in Washington today.

We're going to do it, and I would ask that—the American people are fundamentally fair-minded. And as I would say, I just ask all of you to listen to the answers and do what the American people will do, make up your own mind.

Yes, Brian [Brian Williams, NBC News].

Q. Mr. President, do you worry about the cumulative effect of this drumbeat, which is getting louder? As of close of business today, there will be more people under subpoena in the Travel Office matter than were fired in the Travel Office matter. And second, you must have discussed why it is—even if cleared in the end of all charges—why it is your wife, the First Lady, appears to be the most—arguably, the most controversial First Lady at least in modern politics.

The President. Since Eleanor Roosevelt, for many of the same reasons, from many of the same sources. And that's just part of what we're living through. The American people can make up their own mind about the facts of it.

President's Financial Obligations

Q. To kind of stay on this theme of controversy, the end result seems to be that it's taken a toll financially on your obligations. And there's a magazine report out that's assessed your situation and basically decides that you're pretty close to bankruptcy. Could you give us a little bit of the financial toll?

The President. You know, I feel worse—I suppose that probably is right. I've never added it all up, but that's probably right. And I would like to remind you that today finally, at long last, records that everybody knew existed that weren't released apparently had been released. Apparently, the Republicans finally agreed to release the Resolution Trust Corporation report, which spent another \$4 million of the taxpayers' money to say what we said all along, that there is no basis even for a civil action against us, that we told the truth about the land agreement we had, that we'd lost the money that we'd said we'd lost, that we had nothing to do with operating the savings and loan, that we took no money from it, just like we've said all along.

So I think that's apparently part of the price of this. I tell you, I feel a lot worse about all the innocent people who work here who don't make particularly high salaries and don't have the net worth that we brought here, who had to hire lawyers and pay legal fees too, who were completely innocent of any wrongdoing and who have to deal with that.

I think it is interesting—let me say, I have no objection to—if anybody has a question of me, I'll be glad to keep answering them. But I do think it is interesting, when you were talking about getting the budget balanced and the controversy over Medicare, that this Congress has had over 40 hearings on Whitewater and one hearing on its Medicare bill. And if you look at—and I think that's an observation worth noting. I don't know what it means exactly.

Yes.

Budget Negotiations

Q. Back to the budget for a second. If the Republicans agree to reduce their tax cut, would you, in turn, agree to make more cuts in Medicare and Medicaid?

The President. Let me say again, I think it is wrong—first of all, I agreed not to discuss the negotiations retrospectively, and I'm having