

The President. Well, I think—we discussed a couple of years ago whether it would be an appropriate thing to kind of, to accelerate the timetable from a month a year, 2 months a year, whatever, what would that look like.

I would have to see more evidence on raising the years, simply because I don't know—you know, I could work until I'm 68. And one of the reasons I went to law school is so no one could ever force me to retire, so I'd be able to work until I drop, because I'm a workaholic and I enjoy it and I think it is a good thing. But I don't know how many people out there work in jobs that are physically or emotionally so stressful that we would really be putting them under a lot of difficulty should we do that.

And so I just need—that's why I've said over and over again, I'm prepared to make these decisions with the Congress, I'm prepared to take responsibility for them, but we need to agree upon a process that is bipartisan and fairly quick. I think that from beginning to end, whatever we do, we need to be finished by the middle of next year.

Bipartisanship

Mr. Hunt. Mr. President, the chief Republican in any bipartisan negotiations this year, almost everyone on Capitol Hill says, will be Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott. What are your relations like with Senator Lott? How do you two southerners deal with one another?

The President. Well, I think we understand each other. And I like him. I like dealing with him. As of this date, he has always been very straightforward with me. If he couldn't do something, he would tell me, "I can't do that." If he disagreed with me, he would say, "I disagree." If he thought we could work something out, he would say, "Let me see," and he'd always get back to me and say yes or no. And I have tried to treat him in the same way.

I think we have some similarities in our upbringing and, obviously, in the culture in which we grew up. I feel very comfortable relating to him, and I do like him personally. And I think that he's a man who—he has his strong political convictions, but I believe he loves our country, and I believe that it really—he measures himself in no small measure by what he achieves and whether he actually gets something done for the country.

So, if we can keep the kind of atmospherics that existed in the last month or two of the

last Congress in this Congress, I think we're going to do just fine.

Mr. Hunt. It sounds like different chemistry than you had in the beginning of the last Congress with Republican leaders. Is that fair?

The President. Yes, although I developed—all I had to do to have a good chemistry with Senator Dole was just spend some more time with him. In the first 2 years of my Presidency before he became majority leader, when he was minority leader, I think he had an understandable reluctance to be at the White House very much and to spend a lot of time with me or with our people, because he knew he was going to run for President and because he thought it didn't matter so much because he was a minority leader. Once he became majority leader he understood that we had to meet and work together, and we fairly quickly established a pretty good rapport.

Part II

Professional and College Basketball

Mr. Hunt. Let me turn to a couple of sports questions. We are in Chicago right now.

The President. Home of the Bulls.

Mr. Hunt. Not only the home of the Bulls, but there's one Chicago Bull from a little town called Hamburg, Arkansas.

The President. Hamburg, Arkansas. Scottie Pippen.

Mr. Hunt. Tell us what you know about that Chicago Bull.

The President. He's a remarkable man. I really admire him very much. And you know, we don't know each other well, but in Arkansas everybody knows everybody else. [Laughter] You know, it's a small State. But he came out of a small town. He went to a fairly small school in Arkansas.

Mr. Hunt. The Razorbacks didn't even recruit him?

The President. No, he went to a division II school, and he didn't make that team as a freshman. And then I watched him go from a sophomore, sort of making the team. And then by the time he was a senior he was the best player in his division in the United States. I mean, just—and then of course he was drafted in the pros. And then every year he just got better and better and better, you know, for 5 or 6 years he was just exploding in his capacity every year.

So I think of all the people playing for basketball today you would have to say that he was