

of themselves and their children at the kind of risk that so many Americans are at risk of today because they don't have the consumer protections that ought to be elemental in a society like this. And we have to pass this bill because of the dramatic reorganization of health care relationships in America. And we're either going to do it and strengthen our sense of community and strengthen our future, or we're not.

Now, do we all need to listen to what the practical problems are, should we have a good debate? Of course, we should. But the fundamental truth is everybody knows that this is a public interest issue, that the people who are in these plans cannot protect their own interest unless they band together as citizens and unless their elected representatives create a framework in which they can get the health care they deserve and that they're paying for. That's the fundamental truth. You can argue about the details until the cows come home, but we have to make this change because of the changes in the American health care market.

And I have been very heartened by the fact that many members of the Republican Party have expressed support for similar actions, and I'm hoping that we can get a big bipartisan vote for this bill. But if you look throughout the 20th century, the mission of our party, from the beginning of this century, has been to push the changes that need to be made to preserve the basic values of this country in new circumstances. That has been our mission. And we are here today, together, to fulfill that mission.

I believe we'll succeed. I hope we'll have as much Republican support as possible. But every person here and every person that will hear about this, in their heart of hearts—I don't care what they do for a living or what their position might be, their immediate financial interest—everybody knows there have been dramatic changes in the health care delivery system in America that require a change in the framework of protection for ordinary citizens. And we are determined to give it to them.

Thank you very much.

Situation in Iraq

Q. Mr. President—

Q. Mr. President—

The President. Have we got a shouting contest here?

Q. It's a shouting contest. Do you believe Iraq when it said that it is not experimenting with biological weapons on human beings?

The President. Well, I don't know what the facts are, but I think Mr. Butler's concerns are clearly what justifies the inspection regime. In other words, no American has to decide whether he or she believes Iraq or not, and no American can possibly know whether Mr. Butler is right or not, because all he said is he wants to take a look-see.

There is a framework for inspections. I am very encouraged, by the way, that we got a good statement out of the United Nations Security Council today. It is clear that the international community knows that Saddam Hussein is doing the wrong thing. And we have got to remain steadfast in our determination to continue the inspections process in a nonpolitical way where the leader of Iraq does not get to determine who, when, and what is going on in that inspections process.

I don't know the answer to your question, but I do know that we ought to be able to find out. That's what the U.N. resolution says.

Q. Tariq Aziz says it's a lie.

Q. Mr. President, you're clearly in the better position, though, than most to assess the credibility of those allegations. How seriously should people view the possibility that Iraq could experiment on human beings?

The President. Well, if Mr. Butler says that he believes that he's got enough to go on, we should view it seriously enough to insist that the inspections go forward.

We don't want to do them like they've done us, like they did the head of the inspection team, the American head of the inspection team, where they accused him of being a spy. And we didn't—the United States Government doesn't even know who is on what team from a day-to-day basis. They're all picked by the United Nations. So we don't want to convict them in advance. But if there is enough evidence for Mr. Butler to say that, then he ought to be able to go look.

I would remind you that in 1995, they admitted having stocks of chemical and biological weapons potential that were very troubling. That they admitted. So that's another reason we've got to keep going and continue these inspections. This is a case where the United Nations actually had it right. They've got a good framework, and we just need everybody to stiffen