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LAUTER, DAVE
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REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY
INTERVIEW WITH DAVE LAUTER, THE LOS ANGELES TIMES II

Q I wanted to pick up to where we left off last time. I was going through my notes. I wanted to ask you -- you mentioned in the -- in your speech in Texas you talked a bit about a little book you carry around. Tell me about that. How long have you kept that up?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, that, it's gone through so many variations. Probably 15 years. Maybe longer. I don't really know. It's sort of spilling out of the little book that I have had, and I have it up in my bedroom. I was looking at it the other night thinking I may have buy something that's a little bit bigger. But I don't know how to put it. The little holes in the paper are all torn and worn, so I don't know. But I've carried it a long time.

Q Do you sort of thumb through it when you are sitting --

MRS. CLINTON: I do, yes, I do. I have a lot of things in there that are important to me. I have books that I want to read, as well as keep their quotes, and the scriptures that I am interested in remembering and having at hand.

I used to have -- it used to off-sit pretty nicely in a date book and all that, but now it's all grown (inaudible).

Q Why did you start keeping it?

MRS. CLINTON: Gee, just as a way of reminding myself of thoughts and values that were important that might get lost in the shuffle of everyday. I have always tried to keep track of where I am at any point in any point in my life. And having a continuing collection of what I thought when about something is not only good support for me, but also a reminder of not only the things that remain constant, but how I have changed over time. It's just been a real helpful way for me to collect things.

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Q Do you have a favorite scripture?

MRS. CLINTON: I have so many, so many that are so appropriate to different times; that are comforting in certain times.

When my father died we had a long discussion about which scriptures should be read, and what from the Old Testament and the New Testament would most capture his life and mean the most to him. I sort of hauled out my little book. Bill carries his little book in his head. He has the most extraordinary memory, which I have never had. One of the things I need to carry things around to remind me. We just sat and talked about all the different scriptures we could use.

Q Which did you end up with?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, we ended up, kind of where everybody starts, the 23rd Psalm from the Old Testament. It's just something that's so constant, and my father liked it, and it was real important. And then we ended up with the scriptures from Revelations, and from John, that we thought were appropriate for the Little Rock service. And then we slightly changed it for Scranton.

Q You mentioned that it helps you sort of keep track of how you have changed over the years. I wonder -- I have asked other people how they think you have changed over the years. I wonder whether there are some things that come immediately to your mind.

MRS. CLINTON: I think I have understood much more about my own limits and the limits of human endeavor. I suppose, like any person in her twenties, or early twenties, particularly, at the point of time when I was, which is late sixties and early seventies, limits to what should be done and could be done seemed much easier to overcome than my experiences both personally and publicly have showed me.

But I have never lost my belief trying to work to be a better person yourself and to try to come to terms with your own personal challenges. And I think they are different for everybody. And I think you have to be (inaudible) as you can about who you are to know yourself and to deal with the way you relate to other people and define yourself. It's really a central part of being alive.

And I go back to a lot of the very trite things about to they own self be true. Well, then, how do you figure out what that means? And it's a lifelong journey.

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And I think that my commitment to that is as strong as it's ever been. But my understanding of the difficulties that confront human experience are probably much deeper than they were when I was younger. In fact, I know they are. I am more patient. But I work hard not to become so patient that it slips into an understanding bordering on complacency in the face of injustice and unfairness and irrational but changeable conditions that affect people's lives.

I just don't ever want to lose my concern or commitment to changing what I see as changeable, and is wrong and undermining individuals' capacity to be full, functioning human beings.

Trying to understand the difference between the limitations of the human condition that go back to the millennia -- all are (inaudible) human beings -- and distinguishing those from what we do to ourselves that is not preordained, both individually and in our communal life together, I think of as fascinating. But essential (inaudible) you want to be an actor in the world.

That wonderful old -- it's not so old. I can't remember -- it's one of the ones in my books which I carry around. I can't remember who said it, but that wonderful three-part saying that they use a lot with, I think AA groups and others, about giving you the courage to change the things that should be changed --

Q And (inaudible).

MRS. CLINTON: And know the difference, yes. I think that's a really wise saying. And sorting all that out is a never-ending struggle.

Q How does that translate into public policy to date? On the one hand the danger of falling into complacency that too many people in Washington have about saying, well, this can't be changed, there's nothing that can be done about it. And on the other hand the danger of pushing for so much that you lose what can actually be changed. How do you try to strike that balance?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think that the call for change that was at the real center of Bill's campaign was a thoughtful attempt to strike that balance. If one goes back and reads the speeches that he gave in the fall at Georgetown, and look at the way he tries to develop what amounts to a new political language in this country about personal responsibility, and communal responsibility, and how those have to interact, and how we have to begin expecting

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more of ourselves, both as individuals and as citizens, I believe all of that.

And part of what he and I and many others have done for the last twenty-odd years is to sort all that through. And I have to keep saying that I don't know that any of us yet has adequately explained exactly what we mean in terms that people can easily latch on to. Because we are asking for changes in the way people think as well as in the way they act.

And it's a discussion -- I think we talked about this very briefly the other day. It's a discussion that is taking place not just in America, but in a lot of the industrialized world. Because the whole assumption of the enlightenment and the upward move toward continuing progress rooted in rationality and science and education was certainly blown apart in the 20th century.

We were over at the Holocaust Memorial Museum yesterday, and you could not sit there and not think about how the holocaust was in many ways the nadir of the modern era. If this is what the end result of organizing mankind and implementing levels of organizational efficiency and scientific inquiry leads to, it's a horrific encounter with progress gone awry.

And when one looks in much less dramatic and terrible circumstances at both the industrialized European states, and even the emerging -- not the emerging, but the industrialized Asian states -- as well as North America, and you think to yourself, what is it that's going on in people's lives now where they have been cut loose from so many of the moorings that for centuries held them rooted into family or religion or community or work, and how neither of the kind of 18th, 19th, and 20th century responses, which could be very loosely lumped as the kind of a market-oriented individualistic response or a collectivist statist response, is adequate to explaining what we do with our lives today given where we are technologically and every other development we have lived through.

These are big issues. These are not just programmatic questions that are going to be debated out in the halls of Congress. And the thing that is so interesting to me about, for example, the stimulus issue that we just went through, I view it as, in many ways, the opening round in this continuing debate.

What Bill is trying to do is to instill responsibility again. That's why he presented a budget that

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nobody before had the courage to present. And deficit reduction is not a hot political item, so people may not fully understand the full implications of it. But he was also trying to make a statement that the market alone in today's economies -- not just the American economy -- no matter how much we want to promote it as an essential answer for a lot of issues, which it is, is not the only one.

There has to be some recognition that for many people, particularly in inner city and in other communities that are not able themselves to generate jobs currently, there has to be some recognition of what's happening to the lives of those people. It's not just a statistical argument.

And something like a stimulus package in today's environment would have not only put people to work, which is very important if you are trying to promote work, and yet you've got an economic recovery that's not promoting jobs, it is symbolically important to say you are part of this society, too; we are not going to just feed your dependencies by continuing to give you unemployment insurance or welfare payments; we are going to try to provide circumstances in which you can make a contribution.

All of this goes hand in hand. And because it doesn't fit neatly into any of the preexisting political categories, it is very difficult for people to deal with. So they fall back on caricatures: This is the answer to everything, this is meaningless. There is no in-between.

And part of what I think Bill's great challenge was during the campaign, and certainly what it is in governing, is to help people who have been caught in kind of ideological boxes to break out now. That's very difficult. There are personal political agendas, there are larger political pressures. All of that at work. But that's what he wants to try to do. He views this as such a personal responsibility for him to try to continue to communicate better, to reach out, to let people understand what he is trying to do.

And I view it as an essential part of creating a different political landscape with a small "p", not a partisan political one. But one in which people are again empowered to take responsibility for themselves, in which they recognize the stakes they have in the interdependent economy and the community in which we are all a part, and in which they are emboldened to be courageous enough to make difficult decisions on behalf of their community, and to live with the consequences.

There is no point in trying to be a leader today unless you are willing to tackle some of these hard issues,

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unless you just like the perks and you enjoy exercising the shrinking power that you have. That's a long answer to your short question.

Q I was reading this morning a piece that Robert Cutner wrote in which he was talking about how, quoting someone else who was talking about how during the Johnson era, when all of a sudden progressive politicians found they had the votes to accomplish certain things. They didn't have the votes to affect fundamental structural changes in the country except in the area of civil rights. But in other areas, like health care, for example, and housing, what they did was take the existing structures that they found and basically poured a lot of subsidy into those existing structures as a way of trying to get those existing structures to do some of what needed to be done. Pay people to build low-income housing, or pay doctors to take care of poor people. And that in the end, as the money started to run out, we have discovered that that process doesn't work very well; that it's hard to take a non-functional structure and get it to do what you want.

That, then, poses a much more difficult problem: How do you round up support for actual structural changes which, it seems to me, is a part of what's going on in this whole health care today? How do you do that? How do you do about it?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, that's yet to be seen. It's a daunting task. But I think you do it by starting with a commitment to honesty about the problems and the prospects for change. One of the commitments I have had during the health care process is to make sure we look at every possible issue that affected the financing, delivery and quality of health care. And to be honest about what we find, and to lay those out for the American people.

Much of that will be difficulty politically because in health care, like in a lot of other service systems in this country, people don't know what they have been paying, and they have expected more than they paid for, and they haven't understood the relationship often between the system that they have been part of and the problems that they experienced in that system.

So our first task has been, and still is, because it's been an extraordinarily complex endeavor, to get good numbers that were credible, and that people had confidence in, to explain as clearly as we can how the system operates, what its strengths and weaknesses are, so that when we make proposals for change, people can track where we have come

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from. And I think that that is the first criterion for successful policy changes in today's world. People are hungry for information that they believe is credible. So that's the first thing we've tried to do.

And then, secondly, try to create a system in which people understand how it will work and how it will benefit them personally and benefit the country generally. And then make the most effective, persuasive arguments on behalf of those changes that are possible, recognizing all along that change is always hard, status quo is a formidable opponent, and we will just have to be as committed and dogged as we can.

Q The political aspect, talk to political strategists, and people (inaudible) image, you hear people say things along the line of, referring to you, they say she is so brilliant, she has got so many good ideas, but she frightens people. Strong women, countries like this, if only she were a little softer, if only a little this, if only a little that.

How do you react to that? Does that annoy you?

MRS. CLINTON: I view that as just sort of part of the territory. No matter who you are and what you are doing, people are going to nitpick around the edges. I can only be who I am. And I will do the very best job of that that I can. That's how I think about it.

Q You mentioned in the Texas speech -- I want you to go back to the question about markets. You talked about the difficult decisions, about where life begins, where life ends. One of the advantages of leaving it all to a market is you can sort of pretend that you are not making that decision; the market is making that decision for not doing it.

When you move away from that society actually has to confront those decisions in a conscious sort of way and say where are we going to allocate these sources? How does a democratic society go about making decisions on matters that touch values?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, see, I don't believe that first premise. The market, in something like health care, makes all kinds of decisions that if they were held up to the light of day people would be concerned about it and are to a great extent.

I think the more important issue is how do we keep

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the right combination of the market as a strong tool for encouraging innovation and competition that we hope leads to improved quality as the primary motivating driver within the system. But recognizing that the market has never adequately been able to ensure a hundred percent of Americans, and that in fact the market has been distorted by a lot of the financial and regulatory changes that have been made over the last 25 years, that have not always been good for people either.

So you've got a real tension there. And that's what I meant in the very beginning where what we are looking for is a new kind of partnership between the public and private sector, or the market and the state, if you will, where certain fundamental human values can be respected and encouraged both through individual responsibility and competition and through assuring some level of protection for those who, in the market, are not going to be able to exercise choice.

I mean, if you lived in a housing project in many inner cities, even if you were rich, you couldn't exercise the kind of choice we think of as the market providing in terms of services available on a range of issues. So I think you've got to look at the world as it truly works and not as either those who are pro-regulatory or pro-market would like it to work. Because both of those approaches, when it comes to health care, are not in and of themselves wholly adequate to the challenges we face.

Q You talked about the difficulties of making changes and getting changes to work. Are there certain things already that you or your husband, or both of you, have found particularly frustrating, certain problems that keep you up at night?

MRS. CLINTON: No particular problem. I mean, there's an enormous range of problems. I think the frustration is something that he has expressed in the past. There is such an unfortunate disconnect between what we feel and see and experience in the world outside of decision-making Washington, and inside it.

I was looking at income statistics the other day, and something like six out of ten of the richest counties in America are around Washington. People who make their living off the government, off of feeding at the government trough, off of opposing the government by bringing in millions of dollars from frightened citizens out in the countryside so that the government can be stopped from doing something. It's such an incestuous set of relations here, and it often

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loses sight of what's the point of all of this.

To me the point is to come and do a job that will help people who are not dependent on the government, not secure in their financial well-being because they know how to gain the system, but who are decent people who are the bedrock of this country. And I get very frustrated when I feel that every part of it, whether we are talking about members of government, or journalists, or lawyers and lobbyists, or contractors, whoever it is, sees this as a gain without recognizing that real people's lives are at stake in a lot of these decisions.

You couldn't escape that in state government, Little Rock, Arkansas. You walk out of the Capitol, or walk out of the governor's mansion, and you're just as likely to run into a single mother struggling to make ends meet, who stops to tell you her story, as a banker. And that's not the case here. It is so much more of a closed system. And I want to open it up.

If you look at the people who profit off of government in Washington, they are mostly well educated people who frankly made it through the 1980s pretty well, who saw their incomes rise. And that includes journalists, whose income figures I was looking at the other day, who have health care, and who, no matter where they once lived, or who they once were, either are cynical about real human problems or forgetful. And therefore can engage in the kind of abstract debate that I find very disheartening.

There is no particular issue that bothers me. It's just the general climate of disconnection and cynicism and alienation.

And there is so much hope in this country that we really can come to grips with our problems. And that hope is still largely positive. It could quickly turn to be fueled by anger and negativism. That would be a great lost opportunity.

So my husband's daily commitment is to try to, not only keep that hope alive, but to try to bring some reality to this process that exists inside this city so that people feel and experience what Americans are going through.

He went jogging today or yesterday. And as often when he jogs, people kind of jog up alongside him. And he had a fellow jog up alongside him who told him that he had been career military, and he had been stationed in and around Washington a lot, and then just a year or two got out, and is

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now living in another part of the country, and here in Washington business. He said, "You know, I have to confess. I really" -- he said, "I voted for Reagan twice, I voted for Bush once. If I hadn't lived somewhere else, and actually seen what I have now seen for the last two years, I never would have voted for you." He said, "But I did because there a lot of people out there having a really tough time."

I guess it's that reality that I would like to see more a part of the debate in this city and not the political ups and downs and the pollsters and the stuff that passes for business here.

Q One other quick thing, another note altogether. How is Chelsea adapting?

MRS. CLINTON: Pretty good. She misses her friends a lot, misses her school a lot, missed her grandfather. It's been a tough three months, but she is doing well, and making friends, and enjoying it. But she misses a lot of the independence and freedom that we had when we were in Arkansas. As do I.

Q I can imagine a lot of things, what it would be like to be the President, but actually living in the --

MRS. CLINTON: Takes a lot of getting used to.

Q Having spent, I guess all told, about three years of my life covering the last two presidential campaigns, watching what we all do to you all, I have trouble imagining actually (inaudible).

MRS. CLINTON: But the campaign, at least the one we were in, I don't know what it's like to run when you are the President and you are encapsulated the way that they are, but the campaign, we stop at the Dunkin Donuts. You get a chance to sit down across the counter and talk to some single parent who was working the midnight to eight shift at the Dunkin Donuts -- eleven-seven, I guess it is -- and there wouldn't be anything between you and her. You had a sense of being anchored in your life, as well as other people's lives.

And that's what we are intent upon keeping as much of as we can. Because it's not only good for us personally, it's good for this presidency not to lose touch and not to get put into the same kind of corner of dependency and isolation that has I think affected other presidents. Anyway, that's the plan.

Thanks.

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Q Thank you.

(The interview was concluded.)

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