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AN INTERVIEW OF THE FIRST LADY
CONDUCTED BY RICHARD SPRATLING
OF THE CONCORD MONITOR

MR. SPRATLING: I wanted to ask, you and the President both talked about a willingness to compromise and that this is a thing that starts out (inaudible). Your plan starts the debate. you mentioned it today that there are some features that could be improved and changed. I wanted to ask how strongly you feel that your plan is the best plan, and how does that square with your statements about change?

MS. CLINTON: Well, I think it is the best plan of the ones that are currently being considered. Many, many people, even those who disagree with parts of it, say repeatedly that there are things they would want to improve about it, but it is the best, most comprehensive approach to trying to resolve all of the health care issues we face.

What the President has meant and what I have repeated is that if there are better ways that are developed during the legislative process to work out some of the ways that we reach our goals like universal coverage and simplicity, getting rid of the paperwork and other points that I made earlier, we're open to that. I mean, we want this to be the result of the best thinking in America because it is something that is so important.

MR. SPRATLING: You mentioned legislative process. There are, what, seven or eight plans now in Congress? What is the chance that there will be so much compromise and bickering that we will end up with nothing out of this or something that's next to nothing?

MS. CLINTON: I don't think that will happen because what has occurred in the last months is a realization on the part of millions of Americans about why we need to reform our health care system. For the first time, people

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are making connections between their rising costs and the fact that we don't have any system for trying to contain costs. I mean, that's beginning to sink in.

So I don't think we're going to have nothing at the end of the process. I think that people who strongly support health care reform will have to remain actively involved in making sure that the legislation moves in the right direction, but I think that will occur.

MR. SPRATLING: Whenever I talk to somebody about the plan, even supporters of the plan, their reservations are over cost and financing. Do you have a quick answer? What do you say to people when that comes up?

MS. CLINTON: First of all, this plan is financed the way we now finance health care, by the employer/employee system, but we require everybody to participate, which will be a significant number of people who, for the first time, will be paying for their health care, which they should be making that contribution.

We have a tax on tobacco which is designed both to raise money and to deal with a serious health problem, the result of tobacco use. We have worked out how to use the savings we will get in the system by getting rid of waste, and fraud, and abuse and other changes so that there is more than enough money to fund this.

This is not very far from what I think most Americans would understand if they sat down and said if I'm making a contribution and yet we've got to support academic health centers like the one here at Dartmouth, and we've got to support public health, we're going to need a little bit more than I put in. This is how it all works.

I don't think there's ever been any piece of legislation that has been more thoroughly analyzed and gone over with a fine tooth comb by economists and actuaries and other people. But we welcome the analysis because we want everybody in all of the plans to be looked at as closely.

MR. SPRATLING: My next question is one that was asked a couple of times inside about this small position practice, one and two person practices.

MS. CLINTON: Let me just hold off for a second.

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MR. SPRATLING: Sure.

MS. CLINTON: This is terrific. This is so much fun. The lights are up. It's like a real Christmasy scene.

MR. SPRATLING: You were here in February of 1992. Did it change from your days as a student?

MS. CLINTON: You know, the basic shopping area, I'm sure the shops are different, the basic campus.

MR. SPRATLING: It feels the same?

MS. CLINTON: Yes, it feels pretty much the same except for women being here. That's the difference.

MR. SPRATLING: With managed care and managed competition coming or already here and spreading, is the one and two position practice that many people in New Hampshire go to now, is that a dying breed?

MS. CLINTON: Not necessarily. I think that what I see happening around the country is that physicians in their practices are deciding that they want to be part of fee-for-service networks so that they maintain their independence, but they're part of a network so that together they aren't just all up on their own. They can become a health plan.

So that, say, all of the small group practices, the one, two and three person practices in northern New Hampshire, if they form themselves into a health plan, then they could share some expenses because, for example, they might not all need to have a billing clerk or they might not all need to have an accountant. So they could actually realize some benefits without giving up their independence.

Other solo and small practice physicians around the country are doing something a little different. They are affiliating with other institutions like I know in some parts of the country there might be a (inaudible) clinic, for example, that will go out into the countryside around Rochester, Minnesota, and say we'd like to have a contract with you so that people in your area who join our health plan can be taken care of there and only need to come to us if they need to be hospitalized.

So that's another alternative. So I think there

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are several ways that physicians who value their independence and their solo practice will be able to maintain that if they decide to do so.

MR. SPRATLING: Do you think under the current movement to managed care without reform that that --

MS. CLINTON: I think it will be increasingly difficult. It's not just a question of whether they will be forced into networks that will be buying up practices and things that you heard about today. It's also that if we don't reform the system, you will have more and more people losing their insurance. You will have more and more people falling onto the Medicaid (inaudible). You'll have more and more pressure to cut the costs of Medicare which will put further cost pressures on the rural physician because they have a higher than average poor population, Medicare/Medicaid combined population.

If we don't do something to reform the system to get costs under control now, I think the financial pressures that many rural hospitals and doctors face will just get much worse.

MR. SPRATLING: Non-health care question: Do you ever get to see the Hillary Quarterly?

MS. CLINTON: No, I don't.

MR. SPRATLING: Are you aware of the Hillary Quarterly?

MS. CLINTON: I heard something about it, but I don't read it.

MR. SPRATLING: It's published in our town, although I don't -- I haven't actually seen it myself, either.

MS. CLINTON: Do you work full time for the Concord?

MR. SPRATLING: Yes. I'm actually the health and environment reporter.

MS. CLINTON: How long have you done that?

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MR. SPRATLING: Four years.

MS. CLINTON: Is that right?

MR. SPRATLING: Yes. I was covering health before it was much of an issue.

MS. CLINTON: How did you get interested in that?

MR. SPRATLING: Well, I was a biology and environmental studies major in college. I studied or I covered the environment for a weekly paper on Martha's Vineyard.

MS. CLINTON: Which one?

MR. SPRATLING: The Gazette.

MS. CLINTON: Oh, I love that paper.

MR. SPRATLING: It's an odd paper, isn't it?

MS. CLINTON: It's really idiosyncratic. I love it.

MR. SPRATLING: It was a good place to get started, and then I came up here after that.

MS. CLINTON: Where did you go to college?

MR. SPRATLING: Oberlin College.

MS. CLINTON: Oh, yes. When did you graduate?

MR. SPRATLING: 1987.

MS. CLINTON: What's the president's name?

MR. SPRATLING: Starr, Fred Starr.

MS. CLINTON: Starr. Was Fred Starr there when you were there?

MR. SPRATLING: Yes. He and I got there the same year, 1983.

MS. CLINTON: I only met him once, but I thought he

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was a very interesting man. Apparently he's embroiled in quite a discussion now about whether to cut to three years the undergraduate education.

MR. SPRATLING: Yes.

MS. CLINTON: What does all that mean?

MR. SPRATLING: Well, he's trying to find ways, I think, to make a private liberal arts education affordable for people. I think he's saying that a lot of what people do is elected stuff anyway. You can do it in three years and maybe we should let some students do it in three years if it will mean they'll be able to go at all. I don't know other than what I read in the papers.

MS. CLINTON: Were you pleased with Oberlin?

MR. SPRATLING: Oh, very much. I loved it.

MS. CLINTON: I really wanted to visit there during the campaign. I've never been to Oberlin. I've had lots of friends who attended there. I really wanted to go. The student body got a petition asking me to come, and I never could work it out to get there. I hope I will someday.

MR. SPRATLING: You should go sometime.

MS. CLINTON: What's the best time of the year to go?

MR. SPRATLING: Well, not this time.

MS. CLINTON: Does it get cold?

MR. SPRATLING: The weather is awful. This time of the year it rains.

MS. CLINTON: Where exactly is it?

MR. SPRATLING: It's 35 miles -- spring and fall.

MS. CLINTON: How do you like New Hampshire? It's the primary --

MR. SPRATLING: It's the primary paper in Concord,

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but (inaudible).

MS. CLINTON: But I thought it was given the Union Leader a real run for its money in circulation?

MR. SPRATLING: Some places, not in circulation. The Union Leader is a statewide paper and we don't reach statewide. We're one of several the smaller dailies that compete within our area but not statewide. We just started a Sunday paper about a year ago and that -- if we're going to compete with the Union Leader, it will be on Sundays. We're expanding that area, our circulation area, on Sundays.

MS. CLINTON: The Concord paper ran one of the best photographs of my husband I've ever seen.

MR. SPRATLING: You told me that.

MS. CLINTON: When he spoke before the New Hampshire legislature, they took a picture -- I wish I could remember the photographer's name, but the picture was taken in the chamber. There was no special lighting, anything like that. It was a great picture. I think the paper thought it was a good picture because they ran a really big size of the picture. It was one of my all-time favorite pictures of him.

I obviously paid attention to the paper after that because I thought what good judgment they've got doing that great picture, but then I read it. Of course, I was very grateful when the paper endorsed the President. I thought that was one of the best editorials that came out during the whole campaign.

MR. SPRATLING: We published a couple of photographs of you that were taken by Annie Leibowitz for --

MS. CLINTON: Oh, the (inaudible) photographs.

MR. SPRATLING: The Union Leader did the same, I think. The next day or two days later, Mackey Globe (phonetic), the publisher, printed a not-so-nice --

MS. CLINTON: I heard they editorialized against my photograph.

MR. SPRATLING: Exactly. I guess I wanted to ask you about that, though. She was saying that it was

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undignified and that it was a comedown for the Office of the First Lady.

MS. CLINTON: I don't agree with her.

A PARTICIPANT: I'll respond.

MR. SPRATLING: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: I believe, and she should doublecheck with Vogue, but every First Lady has sat for Vogue.

MS. CLINTON: Oh, that would be a good thing to put in your paper. I didn't know that.

A PARTICIPANT: Not every in history. I mean, I don't know when Vogue came into existence.

MR. SPRATLING: Right.

A PARTICIPANT: But I know definitely from Jackie Kennedy on.

MR. SPRATLING: Is this the first for Annie Leibowitz?

A PARTICIPANT: In terms of?

MR. SPRATLING: First Lady?

A PARTICIPANT: Backing Ms. Clinton or for Vogue?

MR. SPRATLING: No, the first time she's done a First Lady?

A PARTICIPANT: I don't know. You'd have to check with Vogue. I don't know.

MR. SPRATLING: How did that come about? We just ran the picture.

MS. CLINTON: I had forgotten but yes, they all did it.

A PARTICIPANT: Yes. We had done an interview with them for a rather in-depth story and they wanted photos. So

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they sent Annie Leibowitz to shoot the pictures.

MR. SPRATLING: If this health care thing is ever resolved, do you see yourself falling into a different role as First Lady? Is there another issue that you'd like to --

MS. CLINTON: I hope it is resolved for the sake of the country, but I also have been in the past months speaking out on other things that I care a lot about. I am very concerned about violence, particularly the breakdown of the family and the way that feeds into a cycle of violence. That's something I worked on for 20 years. It's something that I really am committed to. I think there's a direct connection between health care reform and some of these social problems that we confront, which I would like to make very clear.

But in addition, I'm hoping that we're turning the country around in its attitudes about what is responsible and irresponsible behavior and what the obligations of parenting are and what the government in partnership with the private sector and communities can do to create better atmospheres for children to be raised and schooled. It's one of the things that I've been interested in for a long time and I'll keep talking about those and working on them.

MR. SPRATLING: Do you see something as prominent as your role in the health care?

MS. CLINTON: I don't. I mean, I'll do whatever the President asks me to do. I want to be as helpful as I can in trying to make our contribution to this administration, but I don't have any particular ideas in mind.

MR. SPRATLING: What kind of response did you get when 60 Minutes aired the out-take of the light falling on the couch behind you?

MS. CLINTON: Nothing. Nobody said anything to me.

MR. SPRATLING: We ran an (inaudible) piece from somebody in Connecticut, so it must have gone over the wires. He was trying to describe it as a turning point, as something that showed your true colors, you and the President?

MS. CLINTON: That's interesting. I didn't see it either. I guess I should see that sometime. It was one of

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the scariest things that ever happened to me. I was terrified and my husband was so quick. He's so good in emergencies and crises. I felt so relieved that he was there because it was one of the scariest things that ever happened to me physically.

MR. SPRATLING: Apparently you went right back to the interview?

MS. CLINTON: Yes. Nobody was hurt and we took a few minutes to try to recover from the shock of it, but then we finished the interview.

MR. SPRATLING: Well, listen, thank you very much. I really appreciate it.

MS. CLINTON: I really appreciate it. I enjoyed talking with you.

(The interview was concluded.)

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