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The

NEWSHOUR

with Jim Lehrer

Tuesday, May 28, 1996

Arlington, Virginia

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MR. LEHRER: Mrs. Clinton, welcome.

HILLARY CLINTON: Welcome.

MR. LEHRER: The jury on the Whitewater trial in Little Rock, the deliberations, what do you and the President have at stake?

HILLARY CLINTON: Well, we shouldn't have anything at stake, if people were actually looking at the tape and what it's about. There has been no indication that my husband--the only allegation that was ever made about him in the last four years was made by David Hale, who everyone, the prosecution and the defense and the people following the trial--so I don't think there is anything at stake. Obviously, we know the people involved. We are concerned about our fate and anything affecting either of us, it doesn't really matter which way it comes out with regard to us.

MR. LEHRER: Well, the conventional wisdom, as you know, is if there is an acquittal, the people say there isn't anything to this, wrap it up. If there's a conviction, people will say, well, there is something to it, the case should go on. Do you agree with that conventional wisdom? Forget about the specifics of the case.

HILLARY CLINTON: Listen, the conventional wisdom about Whitewater always is take any straw you can to go on, so I don't have any doubt that there are those who will say it should go on. I just would like to tell them, go on where we've been going on for four years, every time there's been an official investigation. That proved out to be the case. So I don't have any doubt that since so much of this is politically inspired it will go on almost regardless of what happens anywhere. It has a life of its own.

MR. LEHRER: Politically inspired by whom, what political group is this doing all of this? An awful lot of people involved in the U.S. Senate, the prosecutors, FBI agents, and all that, I mean, who is behind this conspiracy?

HILLARY CLINTON: Oh, Jim, I don't know. As someone watching it and someone who's been caught up in it, certainly there are many people who for a number of years have been opposed to my husband and his policies, have been deeply involved in, uh, stirring all this up. And I hope that it comes to an end. It should be. It should be wrapping up since there's no there there, it ought to finally be put to rest as we have now seen David Hale's accusations against my husband put to rest. They are discredited; they should be off the radar screen. But every time I think that's the case, it seems to get a new burst of energy from somewhere.

MR. LEHRER: What about the campaign, do you think it'll come up in the campaign?

HILLARY CLINTON: Well, I hope not. It doesn't have anything to do with anything that the American people--we're in a presidential campaign, uh, there's no factual basis for the charges, so it should not be in the campaign, but do I think it will be in the campaign? Of course, it will be in the campaign. I think everything, including the kitchen sink, will be in the campaign. So I don't have any doubt that, uh, people who are opposed to my husband will say or do anything in this campaign which I regret, but nevertheless it will happen.

MR. LEHRER: You said this before, that you think this is going to be a nasty campaign. Why? Why do you think this one is going to be particularly nastier than others?

HILLARY CLINTON: I think that unfortunately a lot of our campaigns have gotten nasty and mean-spirited in the past years. I think it's because when people do not have their own vision for what this country should do, don't have a positive program to help people get and keep jobs or provide health care, better education, or keep the environment clean, then you're more likely to see a campaign based on personality. And I don't think that that's good news, but I hope that the American people will see it for what it is. We have a lot of confidence in the American public and

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expect that will be what they'll do.

MR. LEHRER: Well, what about your husband's own campaign put out a commercial in the last couple of days which accuses Sen. Dole of being a quitter, uh, because he quit, he quit because of the gridlock in the Senate, running from his responsibilities as Senate Majority Leader in order to run for President, is that, is that clean campaigning?

HILLARY CLINTON: Well, I think if you'll remember the President has been the subject of relentless attacks by everyone, including the other side, raising all kinds of questions about him that often have no basis in fact, and this President knows that he wants to run a campaign based on the issues but at the same time, the issues have to move through the Congress. And we've had months where this President has said, come, let's work this out, you know, I'll move toward you, I'll try to figure out a way to get a balanced budget that I can live with. Here's one that works in seven years, and instead of working on that, we find that there's no real response on the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, so I think it's a fair statement of the facts. And it is something that, you know, the President didn't do. He's just commenting to his own position that this is something he wishes had happened, that we could still be trying to do America's business, instead of be out campaigning.

MR. LEHRER: To my point, the point that's been made in the "New York Times" and the "Washington Post" in the last couple of days, that that's a personal attack on Sen. Dole. You don't-

HILLARY CLINTON: It's a statement of fact. I don't think it's a personal attack. I mean, he quit the Senate. That is something that people will have to judge on their own.

MR. LEHRER: So it shouldn't be interpreted as an attack on his integrity or his character and that sort of thing, as it has been?

HILLARY CLINTON: I don't think so. I don't see it that way.

MR. LEHRER: Not in the category with these attacks that have been made against your husband?

HILLARY CLINTON: It has been relentless four years. I don't think it comes close.

MR. LEHRER: Yeah. Well, who stops it? Because everybody always says the other guy started it, the other guys are always worse, and everybody complains about it. The people who do it complain about it and then turn right around and do it. Whose responsibility is it to stop nasty campaigns?

HILLARY CLINTON: I don't think, I don't think that we're talking about nasty campaigns, and I don't see that you're talking about that ad as nasty campaigning. I think it's everyone's responsibility to try to talk about the issues, and that's what my husband has done, as a candidate, as President, he talked about what he wanted to do when he ran in '92. He's been doing it. He's talked about what he wants to do in this campaign and beyond. Uh, it's hard to have a one-way conversation. He, you know, has said over and over again, uh, here's what I want to do on crime, here's what I've done, here's what I will do, here's how I want to move on welfare, uh, here's how I would balance the budget without hurting Medicare or Medicaid, or undermining education or the environment. Uh, it's difficult for the people's business to be done when there's not much of a response on the other side. So I don't see that as a comment on negative campaigning. I think it's just a description of the situation we find ourselves in right now.

MR. LEHRER: How involved are you going to be in making decisions like run that advertisement, don't run that one, this one is fair, this one is unfair? Is that something you're going to do on a regular basis?

HILLARY CLINTON: I haven't even seen the advertisement. I've only read about it. That's not part

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of what I'm doing in the campaign, and it is up to the team that the President has pulled together, all of whom are extremely capable. If I have opinions or suggestions, I'll offer them, but I'm not part of making the final decision. The final decision is made by the President, and that's the way it's always been. You know, my husband has run--I've lost track of how many campaigns since I've known him in our more than 20 years of marriage, and he makes the decisions. He gets a lot of info, but it's his campaign.

MR. LEHRER: Is his famous two-for-one deal still in effect?

HILLARY CLINTON: (laughing) I don't know. Do you think there's a fire sale somewhere? We could put it up--(laughing)--I don't have any idea. I mean, I find all of this a little bit, you know, funny, I suppose. My husband and I have been husband and wife and best friends and partners for a very long time. We work together. We support each other, and I think most married couples that stay together as long as we have are in the same boat. I mean, so, you know, I'm going to be there for him. I'm going to do whatever I can, and that's part of what I believe in, and that's what I'll be doing in this campaign.

MR. LEHRER: Are you comfortable with the fact that the polls show that for the first time maybe since Eleanor Roosevelt that you are a First Lady that people have strong enough opinions about pro as well as con that they might cast a vote because of that, in other words, I think Hillary Clinton is terrific, I'm going to vote for Bill Clinton, I think Hillary Clinton is lousy, I'm not going to vote for Bill Clinton. The polls show this is the first time this has happened in a long time. Are you comfortable with that?

HILLARY CLINTON: I don't believe that.

MR. LEHRER: You don't believe it?

HILLARY CLINTON: I don't believe that people vote for President based on spouses. I don't even think they vote much based on vice presidents or any other factor. I think they choose between the two people who are running. Somebody sent me a button from one of the Roosevelt campaigns that said, "I don't like Eleanor either," so I think that a lot of people who make up their mind about my husband also have an opinion about me and if they like my husband, they're more likely to like me, if they don't like my husband, they're not as likely, which I think is the way it goes.

MR. LEHRER: But you don't--you're not suggesting that the polls are wrong in that it's an unusual situation that you have, I mean, that, that the strong, the strong opinions that people have about you, they're positive as well as very negative, because it's very unusual, you're not challenging that?

HILLARY CLINTON: Oh, no. I know people have strong opinions but I just don't think that it will in the end influence very much of anybody's vote for President.

MR. LEHRER: Now, then if there is a Clinton second term, are you going to do things like you did before on health care reform, take special projects of that nature?

HILLARY CLINTON: Well, you know, I've continued to do a lot of that. I worked, umm, at my husband's request on Gulf War issues related to illnesses that our veterans had, and I'm so pleased today that the President made the announcement about agent orange. And I would predict at some point in the future--I don't know when or under what circumstances--we'll learn some more about what happened to a lot of our folks in the Gulf too. Uh, but I've worked on a variety of other issues. I will continue to do that. Umm, I like helping to solve people's problems. I like working with the President. We have a lot of fun when he asks me to do something, so I anticipate that in the second term I'll continue to be part of trying to help and do whatever I can to help the country.

MR. LEHRER: So the public perception that you got your nose bloodied on health care reform, you're not going to do that anymore, that's not true?

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HILLARY CLINTON: Well, I don't know that I will take a high visibility position with a, you know, a great big target on my face again, umm, on an issue that is as controversial as that, but I certainly will continue to work to try to improve health care, particularly for children. I think it's just a very sad state of affairs that when the President started, we had 37 million uninsured Americans and now it's over 41 million. So we're going in the wrong direction, and we've seen that progress can be made on some fronts, but we have some business ahead of us like getting the Congress to pass out the Kassebaum-Kennedy bill so that the President could sign it in a form that will actually try to help people. So there's a lot of work that I would like to see happen in a second term that if I could be helpful doing, I will.

MR. LEHRER: How does it work? You feel strongly about some issues. Let's take children's issues. Do you talk to the President about it directly? Do you go to the chief of staff? Do you go to a cabinet officer? How do you get your strong opinions voiced within the administration these days?

HILLARY CLINTON: Well, I think it depends upon the issues. Umm, I talk to my husband about everything. We talk constantly, and, umm, you know, he tells me sometimes why what I think wouldn't work or thinks it's a good idea and he'll look into it, but sometimes I talk to other people in the administration as well. It depends upon what it is we're trying to achieve. You know, I've worked very hard, for example, to set up partnerships with American hospitals and hospitals particularly in the former Soviet Union that don't have resources that they need. Now that's something that, you know, I and my staff will work on with people in the State Department or people in the Defense Department and my husband will know about it and the chief of staff may know about it, but it doesn't make headlines. It's not something that anybody is really focused on, and so that's kind of the way it works, what can make a difference based on what I've seen and learned or what the President asks me to do.

MR. LEHRER: Let me ask you about the "Time" Magazine interview about, uh, is--are you and the President seriously considering adopting a child?

HILLARY CLINTON: Well, if you read the interview--

MR. LEHRER: I did, every word.

HILLARY CLINTON: What I said is that for years we wanted to have another child and, umm, we have from time to time talked about adopting a child. And I've publicly talked about that. This is not the first time. In fact, I did an interview with Larry King three years ago and I talked about it. All of a sudden it's news, and if it can help people think about adoption, I hope that they will, because I've been very involved in trying to promote adoption because we have so many children in our country who need and deserve a home. But this is on kind of the back burner for us until after the election, umm, because we can't really go much beyond the talking stage right now.

MR. LEHRER: But is it a serious possibility that if, if the President is reelected, that you would adopt a child here and bring a new--an adopted child into the First Family?

HILLARY CLINTON: Well, we would certainly consider it, but it hasn't gotten beyond the talking point, and so I don't want to say anything more than that. But I have, I've spent a lot of time helping kids, encourage adoption, and talk about adoption. I've had a number of events here at the White House that are aimed at promoting adoption. I really believe in it, and you know whether or not it's something that my husband and I eventually decide to do I hope other people who aren't in as high a visibility position as we are, for example, might consider it. You know, I worry. I've talked with specialists in this area about what it would mean to bring a child, especially an older child, into a home where not just living in the White House, in your position, in any position where somebody's in the public eye, that would pose extra special burdens for a child, so there are lots of things we would have to think about. But if by talking about it, I can encourage more people to adopt, I hope they will.

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MR. LEHRER: Why do you think this thing has become such a big deal suddenly, if you say you've talked about this before?

HILLARY CLINTON: Well, people have short memories, but, you know, I can give you a long list of all the places I've talked about it, including just three weeks ago in the Roosevelt Room, when I had a Mother's Day event about adoption, and I've said, you know, we've always wanted to have more children but it didn't end up on the front cover of a major news weekly. I think that makes the difference.

MR. LEHRER: That's makes a difference.

HILLARY CLINTON: You know, I have learned a lot about how you can say the same things over and over and over again publicly and privately but then all of a sudden somebody makes a decision that is news and it's news.

MR. LEHRER: It depends on who's listening at any given moment. Your book has been a terrific success. How many weeks has it been on the best seller list?

HILLARY CLINTON: I don't know. It's been on I think 16 weeks or so, something like that.

MR. LEHRER: Yeah. Are you ever going to write another book?

HILLARY CLINTON: Absolutely. Now there I can tell you I know I'm going to do that.

MR. LEHRER: Are you going to write a book about your experiences as First Lady?

HILLARY CLINTON: At some point I will do that, yes.

MR. LEHRER: Do you know what the theme will be?

HILLARY CLINTON: Umm, I don't know. I'm sure there will be a big section about, uh, hairstyles and probably raucous dinner conversations I've had with you and others in Washington and maybe what I've learned and how I see Washington from the perspective of living in this wonderful house.

MR. LEHRER: Yeah. Are you keeping a diary? Are you keeping good notes on what's happened to you?

HILLARY CLINTON: Heavens no! It could get subpoenaed. I can't write anything. (laughing)

MR. LEHRER: So well, when it comes time to write this book, you're just going to sit down and try to remember all this?

HILLARY CLINTON: I have tons of, you know, schedules and information and all that stuff, but you know, there's been a real crimp put in history by these absurd investigations that have gone on where people, you know, don't even want to, you know, say I had dinner last night with because if you say that, the person you had dinner with is likely to get called before some committee somewhere.

MR. LEHRER: But is that a serious issue that, that you, the First Lady of the United States of America, would hesitate to make a diary because you're afraid it might be subpoenaed?

HILLARY CLINTON: It's not a question of hesitation. It's a question of realism. You know, I, I know very well--I--you know, I will say again what I said at the beginning, that since my husband declared for the Presidency back in '91, umm, there have been an enormous number of attacks and assaults coming from all directions on him, and when he became President, there were many in this

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town and elsewhere who didn't think he should have won and didn't think that he had any right to be here, and so we have lived with this, umm, extraordinary kind of atmosphere unfortunately, and I just think it's the better part of wisdom not to do something like that.

MR. LEHRER: They'd love to get their hands on your diary.

HILLARY CLINTON: Of course they would and then they'd go after and persecute every friend of mine, everybody I've ever talked with, everyone I've had a conversation with, what did she really say, who can remember those things, but, you know, that are of importance only to try to make a case against somebody? It's very sad.

MR. LEHRER: And that sadness will be in your book when do write it?

HILLARY CLINTON: Oh, of course, it will. I mean, I think it's not from a sad--only on a personal level--it's sad, umm, collectively. You know, I talk to older members of Congress, for example, and they tell me how much fun they used to have getting to know each other, spending time with each other, maybe having disputes or disagreements over issues, but treating each other with civility and respect. Umm, we are just living in an evidence-free zone right now where people feel they can say or do anything to those of us in public life and you know we'll survive it, we're not, you know, we're not worried about us personally, but it's a commentary on the times we live in and what's important. To me what's important is dealing with the problems people come to me to talk about, you know, keeping their jobs in the face of downsizing, funding health care if your child's gotten sick, you know, reforming welfare in a way that provides some kind of child care so people can go to work, umm, keeping the environment clean, the things that are on people's minds that they want their government to deal with, and instead, we have all these silly hearings that last longer than, you know, anything than analyzing Medicare changes that were proposed, things that will really affect how people live, I don't think that it makes for good government. It is not a good way for our democracy to operate.

MR. LEHRER: Mrs. Clinton, thank you very much.

HILLARY CLINTON: Thank you.