

**PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION**

Question 1 from the audience at the AP Managing Editors  
Association Annual Conference 09/18/96

You have spoken often on the behalf of children however the changes in welfare law, appear to put children at risk; how do you and your husband reconcile this? Well, I think I start by saying that the existing welfare system is something that a lot of us who care about children believed had to be done for a variety of reasons, the welfare system as it has been operating was not serving a large number of children who were caught in generational poverty and though even the existing welfare system is primarily a stop gap measure for the majority of people who come on and off the welfare roles for the hardcore welfare recipient and family who are caught in that system. I don't think anyone could make to me a convincing argument that we needed to continue doing what we were doing. So the issue became how to change the existing welfare system in the welfare bill that the President signed I believe has some very important and positive features in it, whether you are looking at trying to put a time certain for the end of welfare, increasing childcare support, increasing child support enforcement, there's alot in that welfare bill which the President has advocated ever since he got involved in welfare reform when he was the governor of Arkansas. And there are features in that welfare bill which are not ones that the president thinks are going to be beneficial for anybody and particularly for children. But I think when you look at what the president was faced with which was a commitment to end welfare as we know it which I support and which he has championed for years, along with some of the features which he had fought hard for and with the removal from the existing bill, the features he had found most objectionable in the previous bills that he had vetoed, on balance, I think signing that welfare bill will open the door to the kind of welfare reform that can make a real difference in people's lives. Now is that going to be easy, no. But no welfare bill implementation, no matter what its provisions, was ever going to be done easily. Its going to take a lot of hard work over the next months and years working with states and cities, working at the federal government level to implement welfare correctly as best we can. It's also going to take some humility and honesty about what works and what doesn't work. Already we're beginning to hear from the very states which argued strongly in favor of increased state control, pleas for more authority, more money, more guidance. I think that's a very important step for a lot of states to take. It was merely a political discussion before and now it is real and everybody is going to have to play close attention to the impact of this bill but I, as a person who cares deeply about what happens to the children who are on welfare, I believe that unbalanced signing the bill to start this process assuming we can be humble and honest enough to evaluate it as it goes along to correct mistakes and to move to make sure that any problems in it are brought to public attention which we will look to you to help us do was the

better of the alternatives facing the President. So, it's not going to be an easy task but I think it's an important one for the country to get started on. And the second thing I would say, it also changes the discussion people will no longer be able to end every argument about what should be done to provide jobs in inner cities or improve inner city schools or the multitude of other things that need to be addressed in every community in this country by just throwing their hands up in disgust at the welfare system. That excuse is over. Everybody who has ever cursed the welfare system now has a role to play in making sure welfare recipients are given the opportunities they need to move off of welfare. That means businesses can look to some of the state experiments where businesses took welfare checks and used it as a wage subsidy an experiment that is proving very beneficial for both employers and new employees. That means churches and other community institutions can look to see how they can participate in helping to mentor and sponsor somebody who needs to be moved off of welfare. So it is no longer the systems fault, the government's fault, the liberal's fault, the democrat's fault, the soft headed woolly headed people's fault. Those days are over. We no longer have an entitlement to welfare so lets see what we as a country and an individual communities will now do to deal with the people who will no longer provide a guaranteed income stream for. So it is now everybody's responsibility and I think that is a good development because part of the isolation of the underclass has been because people could walk away and basically turn their backs because everybody knew that that welfare system was corrupt and didn't work and on and on and on. Now it's our responsibility and I think we'll see how ready we are as Americans to be there and provide the kind of support it's going to take to make sure that this works.