

Exchange With Reporters in London, United Kingdom

July 19, 2001

Bipartisan Foreign Policy

Q. Mr. President, any comment on Senator Daschle's comments this morning, saying he was concerned about U.S. isolationism?

The President. One of the things that America has prided itself on is a bipartisan foreign policy, and I would hope that that tradition continues. It's a very important tradition. I think the people of America appreciate the foreign policy positions we've taken, that we're not retreating within our borders. But I'll represent the American interests.

And secondly, the world leaders have found that I'm a person who speaks plainly and openly about key issues. We're willing to listen, but I will still continue to stand for what I think is right for our country and the world.

I happen to believe missile defense is important to keep the world more peaceful, and I believe we need to work together to reduce greenhouse gases. But I refuse to accept a treaty that will harm our country's economy.

Q. Did Tom Daschle go too far? Did he break the tradition?

The President. I think that's going to be up for Tom Daschle to make up his own mind whether he did or not. I do believe it's important to have a bipartisan spirit when it comes to foreign policy. I would hope that tradition continues.

National Missile Defense

Q. Putin backed off a little bit on the possibility yesterday of a missile defense thing.

The President. We're having a good discussion with President Putin on missile defenses. I was pleased to see his comments. Remember, I want you all to remember that he was the first world leader to indicate that perhaps we needed to think differently about the new threats of the 21st century.

He clearly talked about theater defenses, as well as the capacity to develop technologies to intercept missiles on launch. I still believe he understands that need. I look forward to discussing that with him in Genoa. It's going to be part of our dialog.

Now I'm going to go see Her Majesty. I look forward to renewing a friendship. I met her when she came to visit Washington, DC. My mother and dad kindly invited Laura to, and me, to the—a private lunch with her. And it's such an honor to go represent my country there at Buckingham Palace. And of course, we're off to see Prime Minister Blair. I'll be glad to visit with you after I visit Prime Minister Blair.

Previous Meeting With Queen Elizabeth II

Q. Is the "black sheep" story true, sir?

The President. You need to ask my mother. [*Laughter*] Yes. Very good research. Well researched.

President's Visit to London

Q. London in general. Are you enjoying your trip so far?

The President. You know, I have. Somehow, the press got this notion I had never been to London. I was reading in one of our major newspapers the other day that this is the first time I had been to London, which is simply not the case. It is a spectacular city.

I was struck by a couple of things, one, how diverse the city is and how clean it is. And it is a beautiful city.

Winston Churchill

Q. Is it true that you asked specifically to go to the Cabinet War Rooms later on because of your interest in Churchill?

The President. I am. Well, I've always been intrigued by Churchill. I think he was one of the really fascinating leaders. Last week, or, let's see, this week—sometimes, time flies—at some point in the recent past, the British Ambassador brought a bust on loan from the English Government to the Oval Office. So Churchill is now watching my every move.

I loved Churchill's stance on principle. Sometimes in this world, it is important to have a world leader stand up on principle and defend policy based upon principle, not trying to figure out politics.

I also loved his sense of humor. The man was blessed with a wonderful gift of kind of bringing light to politics. And we need that.

We need that a lot of times. People need to learn to laugh.

And when they gave him the Order of the Garter, he said, “How can I accept the Order of the Garter? I just got the order of the boot.” [Laughter] That’s right after he had been defeated.

Q. Is that your favorite Churchill anecdote, or—

The President. Well, I’ve got some, but I can’t repeat in mixed company, if you know what I mean. He was a great leader, and he was blessed with a lot of talents. And I’m really looking forward to seeing that part of his life. You bet.

Q. Thank you.

Visit to the British Museum

Q. Mr. Bush, what do you think of Camden? The Bar of Camden? What do you think so far from what you’ve seen?

The President. If you’re asking about this, the reading room was spectacular. I mean, there’s no way to describe it other than spectacular.

What I found interesting was, we saw the—they have catalogued the list of folks who have signed in over the past to use the room. And Karl Marx and Lenin, Mark Twain, George W. Bush. [Laughter] From one end of the spectrum to the other.

Q. Continuity?

The President. One end of the spectrum to the other.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:45 p.m. at the British Museum. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimir Putin of Russia; United Kingdom Ambassador to the U.S. Christopher Meyer; and Queen Elizabeth II and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom. A reporter referred to a previous conversation between George W. Bush and Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom during former President Bush’s administration. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on the Faith-Based and Community Initiative

July 19, 2001

Back at home, Congress has taken an important step toward building stronger and more caring communities.

In a victory for progress and compassion, the House has acted to expand charitable giving, to increase the help available to poor Americans, and to end discrimination against churches, synagogues, and charities that provide social services. Our Faith-Based and Community Initiative levels the playing field so that all people and groups with a heart to serve have the chance to serve.

I commend Members of Congress, Republicans and Democrats, and especially thank Congressmen J.C. Watts and Tony Hall for working together in a bipartisan way to enact this plan.

I also want to thank countless supporters from across America who have taken this initiative to heart. From small religious congregations to large foundations and faith-based charities, the real support for our work has come from people and groups that put first the injunction to love and serve a neighbor in need. With their help, with the vote in Congress, and with support from major organizations like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops, and the U.S. Conference of Mayors, momentum is on our side. Now the Senate must act, and I urge the Senate to join us to provide help and hope to those who so urgently need it.

This fall, Members of the Senate can provide practical help to community organizations fighting for safer streets and a brighter future for our children.

These groups work to prevent crime and drug abuse, provide help to the elderly, feed the hungry, care for abused women and children, shelter the homeless, and build hope in communities where hope is too often not a resident. We must all take their side. The Senate must take their side.