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MEET THE PRESS

Guests:

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U.S. Ambassador to Japan

SENATOR JOHN BREAUX

(D-LA)

Senate Finance Committee

HAROLD ICKES

White House Deputy Chief of Staff

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Panel: DAVID BRODER, *The Washington Post*
RON BROWNSTEIN, *Some News Organization*

Roundtable Guest: BOB WOODWARD, *The Washington Post*

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MEET THE PRESS

Mr. TIM RUSSERT: Welcome again to MEET THE PRESS. Our issues this Sunday morning: nuclear bombs and Korea, trade and Japan, health care reform and America.

Our guests: A man who has served as United States senator, vice president, the Democratic candidate for president in 1984. He's now the United States ambassador to Japan, Walter F. Mondale.

And we'll be joined by a pivotal voice on the Senate Finance Committee. He's urging President Clinton to significantly modify his health care proposal, Senator John Breaux of Louisiana.

And the White House view of health care reform and more, in his first Sunday morning interview, the Deputy Chief of Staff, Harold Ickes.

And in our political roundtable, all of Washington is buzzing about a new book which chronicles the first year of the administration, the author of "The Agenda: Inside the Clinton White House," Bob Woodward.

And on our panel this morning: David Broder of *The Washington Post* and Ron Brownstein of *The Los Angeles Times*.

And now, with us, a man who's been in the political arena for some four decades, Mr. Ambassador, welcome back to MEET THE PRESS.

AMB. MONDALE: Thank you very much.

Mr. RUSSERT: Korea, front and center, as an issue, certainly involves the Asian peninsula where you're hard at work as our ambassador to Japan. Do you think the North Koreans are determined to be a nuclear weapons power?

AMB. MONDALE: You have to be strongly inclined to say yes. We hope we can dissuade them from it, but what we see going on there, their

resistance compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the development of reprocessing equipment and expansion of that equipment all of that is consistent with a plan to build nuclear weapons.

Mr. RUSSERT: If the answer is yes—we read in the papers this morning that the United States, Japan, South Korea are talking about sanctions, but rather mild sanctions, cultural exchanges and the sort. Why not be tough and say, no oil?

AMB. MONDALE: Well, we—I think that that's not quite what we're doing. We're working on a set of steps developing that with working with Japan, South Korea, IAEA, talking to the Russians, the Chinese and the others, that will be one complete program, that will be—will start out with first step, but it will build up, and it will not be weak; it will not be mild. It will be very strong. It will be designed to bring about compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Mr. RUSSERT: Estimates are that if North Korea continues at its current level of development, by 1996, they'll be developing 10 nuclear bombs a year?

AMB. MONDALE: If you take the worst scenario, if you take the the production that's possible from these plants and the expanded reprocessing facilities, that is a real possibility. That's why this must be headed off.

Mr. RUSSERT: Immediately?

AMB. MONDALE: We're moving as fast as we can. Immediately—it should never have occurred. This is—what we're dealing with is a very isolated, paranoid, threatened government, and we're joining with the others to push them as hard as we can to stop this.

Mr. RUSSERT: Now China—it's reported in the Japanese paper this morning that China has said that sanctions won't work. They're not disposed to go along with them. If China vetoes the sanctions at the United Nations, should the United States, Japan, South Korea go forward with sanctions outside of the U.N. approval?

AMB. MONDALE: Let me say two things. First of all, I think it's significant that the Chinese have not said they would veto sanctions. We don't know what they will do. But they haven't said that. They have said they don't believe in sanctions. They, however, do strongly want a non-

nuclear Korean peninsula. They do want the North Koreans to comply with the nuclear treaty and all of its provisions. They want a stable, non-threatening peninsula. So that in terms of the objectives, we agree on that. But what they will finally do on sanctions, it is not known. But if we are unable to get sanctions through the Security Council because of a veto, and we're not—I don't know that that's going to happen. We hope it won't. We are prepared to proceed...

Mr. RUSSERT: Unilaterally, if necessary?

AMB. MONDALE: Well, in conjunction with Japan, Korea and others.

Mr. RUSSERT: One of the issues at stake is one involving the country that you are representing, the United States, through Japan, and that is each year North Koreans living in Japan export about three-fourths of \$1 billion, \$700 million, in cash, hard currency, back to North Korea. The Japanese have been reluctant to stop that flow. Our own intelligence agencies say that that money is the largest element of hard currency used to pay for the development of nuclear weapons. Why won't the Japanese stop the export of that hard currency to North Korea?

AMB. MONDALE: The Japanese have said—and they're working with us very closely—that if North Korea will not relent, if we have to go to sanctions, that they're prepared to do their part. And that might include that—the dealing with the problem with trade and with these remittances. So they have included that in the list of possibilities. They have not said no to that, and should this turn sour enough where further steps are needed, I cannot speak for the government of Japan, but I believe that they are prepared to take those steps as well.

Mr. RUSSERT: How concerned is the government of Japan, the people of Japan, about the threat of a war with Korea?

AMB. MONDALE: I have talked to all their leaders, both in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in their defense agencies, the prime ministers and the rest, and I would say they are very concerned about the development of nuclear weapons in North Korea. This is a very destabilizing and dangerous development for the whole region, including Japan. They are concerned about the developments of delivery systems that will permit them to carry these weapons throughout the region, and they are taking this very seriously.

Mr. RUSSERT: If, in two years from now, we have imposed sanctions but the North Koreans can continue to develop nuclear weapons at the rate of 10 bombs per year, what should we do at that point?

AMB. MONDALE: I'm going—I'm not going to respond to that question. We have a program here now that we think will escalate pressure upon the North Koreans and make it necessary for them to comply with the NPT agreement and to live up to the regime that's required under that treaty. And these are strong steps. We think we've got a consensus in the region that will allow that to stick and that they will respond. If that doesn't work, then, obviously, other steps will be needed. But I'm just not in the position to comment on that at this time.

Mr. BRODER: Ambassador, North Korea says that if sanctions go into effect, they will retaliate in South Korea and Japan. Do you believe that's just a bluff or is there a risk of war?

AMB. MONDALE: We don't know. We do know that they are traditionally an administration that does make a lot of threats. And we do not, however, bend to those threats. They are a signator of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. They are required under that treaty not to produce these weapons. They are violating the treaty. They are making it impossible for the international agency to monitor what they are doing. Everything they're doing fits a plan for production of weapons. This is an inordinant—this is a very dangerous step for them to take, and we're not going to bend in the face of such threats.

Mr. BRODER: Even if it means war?

AMB. MONDALE: Well, let me put it this way. We don't think they mean it. We have a strong force in Korea, and we have forward deployed forces in Japan. We work closely with the forces in Korea, South Korea. We are not taking anything for granted. We don't think it's going to happen, but we, for example—we've put Patriot missiles in there. We have a weapons enhancement program going on. That's been going on for some years. So we're taking no chances, but we don't think it's going to happen.

Mr. BRODER: Now an American scholar, Zig Harrison, who used to work at my paper, has just come out of Pyongyang saying that the North Korean leadership told them that they're ready to suspend this

plutonium reprocessing if we will offer economic aid to the country. Do you take that offer seriously?

AMB. MONDALE: We've been talking with the North Koreans, directly and indirectly, for a long time now. They know exactly what's needed here. It's compliance for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. They haven't done that. We can't negotiate through indirection. If they want—the bottom line is, if they will comply with the NPT, allow...

Mr. RUSSERT: With the...

AMB. MONDALE: Probably—good idea. Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and the enforcement mechanisms, and that they will agree with—to comply with an agreement they'd made earlier with South Korea about a non-nuclear peninsula, then a lot of good things could happen, but that's all theory now.

Mr. BRODER: Could recognition follow?

AMB. MONDALE: Look, a lot of good things could—if they would do it, but it's all theoretical. We haven't gotten any reaction from them that would suggest that they're ready to do that.

Mr. BRODER: One thing that's not theoretical—Jimmy Carter's going there next week.

AMB. MONDALE: Right.

Mr. BRODER: Is he going with some information or what's his role? What is his—is he helpful or mischief-making?

AMB. MONDALE: No, no. He's—I think—he's going as a private citizen. He stopped by the State Department. He's been thoroughly briefed on what the situation is, so that he can describe to the government of North Korea what our situation is and what our policies are. I have not had a chance to talk to him. I'm sure he's going to strongly urge their compliance with the non-nuclear regime, because I know how deeply he feels about that. So I'm hopeful, and I believe, I'm sure it will be a very positive trip.

Mr. BROWNSTEIN: Mr. Ambassador, let me switch gears to trade. President Clinton came into office promising a tougher stand against our persistent and very large trade deficits with Japan. And here we

are 17, 18 months later still talking. Five areas under negotiation now—are we going to have agreements on any of them by the time the industrialized countries gather next month?

AMB. MONDALE: Look, it's tough, and it's been tough for 25 years. We have made some progress, but it has been very, very difficult. We think now, finally, we've got the talks resumed across a whole range of issues. We have added two new baskets on financial services and intellectual property. The first meetings have been held. They're more hopeful. We think there's a new attitude on both sides that—a new seriousness that makes it more hopeful. We'd like to see some of these agreements reached by Naples, but we're not putting a specific timetable on it. We're not sure we can make it. We'd like to.

Mr. BROWNSTEIN: Now there's been a lot of confusion about exactly what we're seeking in these talks. We've said now, finally, we do not—we're not seeking numerical targets, guaranteed import market share, but we do want quantitative and qualitative measures of progress. Can you describe exactly...

AMB. MONDALE: Yeah.

Mr. BROWNSTEIN: ...what a quantitative or qualitative measure of progress would be?

AMB. MONDALE: Right, and look, I think we've been clear from the start. We have said, from the—we do not want market shares. We're not demanding that we get a certain percent of the market. What we want is very simple, what was agreed to in the framework, that they will open their markets so that the world can trade in areas that are now closed. Maybe the best way to explain that is by reference to the cellular phone agreement, which is, apparently, going to be very successful. In that, for 10 years, although we had an agreement with them, we sold virtually no cellular phones in the Tokyo-Nagoya area. We finally got a new agreement, and in it, we agreed on all the things that are necessary to get Motorola to the consumer—towers, cellular arrangements and the rest, and—so they could get to the consumers. But there's nothing in that agreement that requires a Japanese consumer to buy one phone. That's up to the consumers. There are numbers, all those things are in there, schedules and times, but what happens in the market is up to the consumers. That's the distinction.

Mr. BROWNSTEIN: The Japanese government now, Prime Minister Hata, is a minority government.

AMB. MONDALE: Right.

Mr. BROWNSTEIN: They're facing a new election, possibly after the Diet finishes the budget later this month and no later than this winter, after they finish their electoral redistricting. Are they in position to deliver on, to force through the bureaucracy major changes in our economic relations with Japan?

AMB. MONDALE: Number one, we've tried to be very mindful of the predicament of what is a minority government. These negotiations are occurring with the bureaucracy, the career people. They assure us that they're prepared to make these agreements. We're proceeding on that basis, and I think will be successful.

Mr. RUSSERT: Mr. Ambassador, a couple weeks ago on this program, Senator Sam Nunn, Democrat of Georgia, said that the problem with the Clinton foreign policy is that the president has not designated one person to speak for the administration on foreign policy—flip-flops on Bosnia, on Haiti, on China. What is the perception of the Clinton foreign policy in Asia, vis-a-vis consistency?

AMB. MONDALE: Well, let's take the Korean issue. That's the hottest thing. I would say that there's a good deal of respect and admiration for American leadership there. We have been on that issue right from the start. We have worked closely and patiently with the Japanese and the South Koreans. We have talked with the Russians and the Chinese from the beginning. We have been leading the effort in the international agency to move forward. In my discussions with the leadership of the Japanese government—we just met with ambassadors from the region—we got the same report. I think they feel very good about it. That's a test of what we're doing. There have been some changes, for example, the MFN issue, if that's what you're getting at: I think that was a good course correction.

Mr. RUSSERT: Senator Nunn suggested there should be one voice. There's been a lot of criticism of the Secretary of State here in Washington and around the world. Has anyone approached you about changing your role in the Clinton administration?

AMB. MONDALE: There's nothing to that story. The president made it clear that Secretary Christopher was going to remain, he had his trust and confidence. I think he's an excellent Secretary of State. I've known Warren Christopher for 30 years. He's one of the finest public servants I've ever known, and I'm proud to work for him. I think we do have a spokesman. It is Warren Christopher, and I think he's doing a good job.

Mr. RUSSERT: If the president asked you to serve in a different role, would you be open to that?

AMB. MONDALE: That—if I answered that question, I would be misunderstood. I expect to stay right where I am. I'm glad and honored to be the ambassador to Japan.

Mr. RUSSERT: Let me close on a political note. David raised President Carter...

AMB. MONDALE: Yeah.

Mr. RUSSERT: ...going to North Korea. The last time there was a Democratic president it was a governor from a Southern state who was doing very poorly in the polls and was not re-elected. Again, is history repeating itself? We have a governor from a Southern state, Democrat, not doing well in the polls. In fact, President Clinton's doing more poorly than President Carter.

AMB. MONDALE: Well, we had—this is old history, getting awful old now—but I don't think we had many breaks. We had the collapse of the Iranian regime; we had the taking of the hostages; we had the quadrupling of oil prices. You know, it was just a nightmare, there, the last couple of years. And I think those circumstances drove us out of the White House—the failure of the rescue mission, so we don't have to go over that. I believe this is entirely different. There are a lot of—first of all, this administration is making a lot of tough choices and getting it done—the budget decision, the trade decisions, the NAFTA, the GATT. I think the president just had a spectacularly successful trip to Europe, and everybody says that. I think—and I know he's having trouble right now in the polls. There's no glossing over that, but there is a resilience, a strength, a competitiveness and a skill to that president that I think will carry him through.

Mr. RUSSERT: Why do you think he's having trouble in the polls?

AMB. MONDALE: I don't know the answer to that. But I think that the tests—I mean, a lot of good presidents have had trouble. Probably the best president of my time has been Harry Truman. He always had a lot of trouble in the polls. And I think what finally counts is whether you're a good president and whether you're dealing with the real issues. That's what carries the day, and I believe he's doing that.

Mr. RUSSERT: Mr. Ambassador, we thank you for joining us again on MEET THE PRESS. Welcome back. We hope you come back again, and good luck on your work.

AMB. MONDALE: Thank you.

Mr. RUSSERT: Coming next, will health care, in fact, pass this year? We'll ask Senator John Breaux, Democrat of Louisiana and member of the Senate Finance Committee.

(Announcements)

Mr. RUSSERT: Senator John Breaux, welcome to MEET THE PRESS.

SEN. BREAUX: Glad to be here.

Mr. RUSSERT: In January, the president of the United States stood up and said, "If you send me legislation that does not guarantee every American, every American private health insurance, with this pen, I will veto it." Do you take that veto threat seriously?

SEN. BREAUX: I take it seriously. But what I heard with my ears was very optimistic. He didn't say when he had to have it. I think that universal coverage is absolutely essential, but it should be the end of the process, not the beginning. And I think that's where they made a mistake by saying we have to have universal coverage, and we have to have it right now. I disagree. It's something we can phase in, and I think that will serve everybody well.

Mr. RUSSERT: Over how long a period?

SEN. BREAUX: Well, some of the reports—the Lewin study shows that we can get coverage of health-care costs, 97 percent of all Americans, without any mandates. And I think that's very important. The reason why the president wants universal coverage is not so everybody will have health

care. I mean, if a kid gets hit on a bicycle in the street and he has health insurance, we don't leave him on the street. We pick him up, we take him to the emergency room, we treat him. What they're trying to do is prevent this cost shifting, to make sure everybody pays their fair share. That's why we need it.

Mr. RUSSERT: You mentioned the magic word "mandates." For our viewers who aren't familiar with that term "employer mandates," corporations would have to pay 80 percent of the health-care costs of their employees. Bob Dole has said, as recently as yesterday, he will not accept mandates. Three Republicans on the Finance Committee considered moderates—Chafee, Durenberger and Danforth—have said, "No mandates." Are mandates dead, specifically employer mandates?

SEN. BREAUX: Tim, one of the problems with this is that those in the middle—moderates—it's very difficult being a moderate in Congress now these days. I think there are a lot of liberals who want to do everything, and they want to do it right away. And there are some conservatives who want to do nothing, and they want to take a long time to do it. And I think that's one of the problems we're facing. There are ways to address this mandate. I think the marketplace is what we ought to try and reform. And I think if you do real marketplace reforms, mandates are not necessary.

But there are ways to merge these two problems into a solution that's found in the middle; perhaps phasing some of these requirements out over maybe a three-to five-year period, which would not be an unnecessary burden on employers and businesses and yet provide insurance for all Americans.

Mr. RUSSERT: You said that the administration was taking an "Alice-in-Wonderland" approach—sitting back and letting Congress legislate. What does the White House have to do starting today if they are going to achieve health care this year?

SEN. BREAUX: Well, Tim, I think they need to be involved, and I think I'm seeing some progress. I think all of us are. They are becoming more engaged. You know, we're moving into the fourth quarter and like the score is 0-0. And you don't need the cheerleaders on the field, you need your major players out there trying to get it done—I mean, people like Lloyd Bentsen and "Mack" McLarty. The president is engaged, and the first lady's engaged. But wh—they need a team effort here, and we're in

the fourth quarter, and they need to be involved now. It's not enough just to sit back and say, "Let Congress do its will." We may not have the will to do anything without their help.

Mr. RUSSERT: Can the administration pass a health-care bill with only Democratic support?

SEN. BREAUX: Absolutely not. And I think that we can do it in the budget because we had time limits. Well, you've heard Bob Dole say that he's not going to participate, and I don't think we have all of the Democrats united without some Republican participation. It should be bipartisan. It has to be.

Mr. BRODER: Where is the public on this? Senator Dole yesterday challenged the Democrats, said, "Let's take the issue back to the voters. I don't think they want employer mandates." Who would win in that kind of a test?

SEN. BREAUX: That's a very interesting point, David. I think that some people think Democrats are only trying to help the 15 percent of Americans who don't have health insurance. The 85 percent who do have real problems. They pay too much for their premiums. They have their insurance canceled when they get sick, which is wrong. And if they change jobs, they lose their health insurance. The 85 percent of the Americans who have insurance need help, and they need health reform. And we as Democrats have to also address our proposals towards that group, as well as to the 15 percent who do not have health insurance. I think it's a misunderstood issue right now. We need to do a much better job of saying what is in our proposals.

Mr. BRODER: So you'd be happy if—to take the say—let's have the 1994 election be a referendum on the Clinton health plan?

SEN. BREAUX: I wouldn't mind. I think the Congress has to get something done. And you know, I don't think people back home are concerned about whether Democrats win or whether Republicans win. They think it's time for them to win one for a change. And that means having the Congress work together instead of trying to fight for an issue in the next elections. And I think some of them are more interested in an issue than a bill.

Mr. BRODER: Now, you floated the idea of having so-called triggers that would write into a bill that passes this year that in 1999 or 2000 or 2001, if a certain percentage of the uninsured have not been covered, then you would begin to phase in mandates. Is that—what kind of reception did you get to that?

SEN. BREAUX: I think it has been generally positive. I think my approach is: Look, let's take it one step at a time and make sure we get it right instead of trying to do it all at once and just hoping that we get it right. By phasing in these requirements, I think we'll have a chance to reform the marketplace. We know—it doesn't do us any good to mandate something until we've reformed it.

Mr. BRODER: Do you think Mrs. Clinton agrees with you?

SEN. BREAUX: I think she wants to get a bill, and I think she thinks this is a reasonable approach. And I think it's one that ultimately will survive.

Mr. BROWNSTEIN: Senator, Bob Woodward is coming on later with a story of some chaos in the White House decision-making on the budget. Is there a clear line of authority on health care? Who do you think can cut the deals? Whom are you dealing with? Is it Ira Magaziner? Is it the first lady? Is it Harold Ickes? Who's running things?

SEN. BREAUX: Well, that's a good question. I think the president is actively involved. I've talked with him a number of times. He's actively engaged, and he calls you at 11:00, 12:00 at night to talk about things like health care. But I think he has to have a team with a central focus who can cut the deal, if you want to use that phrase, who can actually say, "We will accept this, but not that." And I think that they have taken the approach, "Well, let—we've made the proposal, and now let the Congress decide it." And that—they can't do that. That is an Alice-in-Wonderland approach, but I think they're much better. I think "Mack" McLarty, I think Lloyd Bentsen—I think those are the type of people who can get the job done.

Mr. BROWNSTEIN: Well, you used that phrase "Alice-in-Wonderland approach" at the White House, but isn't it also an Alice-in-Wonderland view for Democrats in Congress to think that they can walk away from a total crack-up on health care without paying any

price in terms of voter perception that they're perpetuating gridlock on big issues?

SEN. BREAUX: Everybody suffers and probably suffers equally: Republicans who are not being willing to move in a compromise. I think Democrats have shown that we're ready to move. We're still waiting for the Republicans to say, "Yes, we can move to the center," and Democrats also move to the center. The center is where it's going to be ultimately concluded.

Mr. BROWNSTEIN: Given the likelihood—by history, if nothing else, that Republicans will gain seats in this midterm election, is it all or nothing for health care in this session? If it isn't done now, is it receding once again?

SEN. BREAUX: Nothing should be all or nothing. I mean, I think that we all have to recognize that legislation is the order of the compromise. Compromise is not a dirty word, and yet I think some on the left and some on the right think that any type of a compromise is somehow contrary to their basic political instincts. That's wrong.

Mr. BROWNSTEIN: Do you think you can come back and pass anything significant, though, next year given what is likely to happen in November?

SEN. BREAUX: I think it will be more difficult the next time, and I think the Congress will suffer if we don't get it done. But I think we can get it done.

Mr. RUSSERT: Senator Moynihan, the chairman of the Finance Committee, has introduced his bill. How many votes does that have on the Finance Committee?

SEN. BREAUX: Not enough to pass, but I think it's a first step, and I think he did the right thing because you don't propose—and start off with a compromise that you ultimately will have to compromise again. You're going to end up compromising your compromise, and that's not the way to legislate. So I think what he did was to start from a position of strength, knowing that we're going to have to move towards the center. But we're going to need the Republicans to also move towards the center. We can't do it by ourselves, and I think the American people understand that.

Mr. RUSSERT: If the Democrats insist, however, in reporting out a bill, and Senator Dole filibusters, one—do you think he will filibuster?

SEN. BREAU: Well, you'd have to ask Senator Dole, but he has indicated that he is willing to stop if it has employer mandates. And I think that's saying, "Look, we're not going to move." And I think that's not what the American people want. They know it's going to be compromised. You can't draw a line in the sand and say, "If it's not my way 100 percent, I'm not going to play ball." That's not the way we should legislate in this country.

Mr. RUSSERT: Senator, will we have a health-care reform bill this year?

SEN. BREAU: I think we will. I think the chances are better than 50-50. I think things are improving. We're like moving now into the end of the process. The beginning is over, the posturing is over, and now we have to start actually voting. So I think that, you know, the light of the tunnel is there. We can see it.

Mr. RUSSERT: Senator Breau, we thank you for joining us on MEET THE PRESS.

SEN. BREAU: Thank you, Tim.

Mr. RUSSERT: And in a moment, the view from the White House with Deputy Chief of Staff Harold Ickes.

(Announcements)

Mr. RUSSERT: Welcome back to MEET THE PRESS. With us shortly will be Bob Woodward, author of *The Agenda: Inside the Clinton White House*. But, first, with us now is the Deputy White House Chief of Staff Harold Ickes. Mr. Ickes, welcome to MEET THE PRESS.

Mr. ICKES: Thank you.

Mr. RUSSERT: Health care—in January, the president threatened to veto any bill that did not provide health insurance to every American. Senator Breau just said, "Well, you know, maybe we could phase that in over the next 10, 15 years." Acceptable?

doesn't **Mr. ICKES:** I think what—the important thing that Senator Breau said was that he was for universal coverage. That's the touchstone of the president's program. That's what we're working for. We think it will be—there will be a bill put on the president's desk this year that he will sign that will have universal coverage.

Mr. RUSSERT: So incremental over the next 10, 15 years will be...

Mr. ICKES: Well, no, I don't think over the next 10 or 15 years, Mr. Russert. I think that we have to wait to see the bills as they come off the floor. But what is the—the critical point is universal coverage so that, in law, every American has the right to health care, has health-care coverage for life that cannot be taken away. That's the touchstone. The details will be worked out. We're not prepared at this point to comment on the details. As you know, Senator Breau has been a pivotal member of a very important committee. The committee chairman, Senator Moynihan, has just put in his mark, his proposal. They will be working on that over the next several weeks. And he is a very adroit, sophisticated legislator. He understands he's for universal coverage. He understands the presence for universal coverage. We are confident that he will have the wherewithal to work a bill that will come out that will provide universal coverage.

Mr. RUSSERT: Well, part of his sophistication and adroitness this morning was that the Moynihan plan does not have the votes in the Finance Committee, that the plan that is now being put forward by the administration does not have the votes. And he says that the problem is the Democrats have been looking after the 15 percent that don't have health insurance and forgetting the 85 percent who do, who want some reform. Will the plan that is put forward be modest and incremental enough to win Republican support?

Mr. ICKES: We hope that there will be Republican support, and we think that, at the end of this process, there will be Republican support. What is important, though, is that the universal coverage is the critical aspect of it. As you know, there's going to be a lot of changes as this works through the Senate Finance Committee, and what comes out of that, we don't know at this point. However, we are convinced that Senator Moynihan will be able to produce a bill that has universal coverage. And at that point, they will create bills that will go to the floor that will be debated in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. What we don't want to do is to leave behind and leave out people like Jim Bryant, who the president talked about in his radio address yesterday: Works 70 hours a week, has a wife and

several children, has no health insurance. That's unacceptable. Work should be rewarded. And the president is very strongly in favor of that, and, as I said, his touchstone is universal coverage so that the Jim Bryants of the world don't get left out.

Mr. RUSSERT: But they could be left out in the near future, as long as they got it within the next five or 10 years?

Mr. ICKES: Again, those details will be worked out in the legislative process. But as long as universal coverage within a reasonable time is provided, I think the president will sign that bill.

Mr. RUSSERT: How seriously do you take Senator Bob Dole's threat of a filibuster?

Mr. ICKES: Well, Senator Dole is sort of—he seems to have different positions, different times of the week or month. What the American people want are solutions. That's what they elected the president for. He is trying to provide a solution. We think we've provided a very reasonable proposal to deal with health care. We think it's much too early. The American people are not interested, I think, in hearing the talk of filibuster. What they want is for the president and the Congress to provide solutions. That's what they're looking for. That's the leadership they're looking for.

Mr. RUSSERT: Do you think you can pass a health-care reform bill without the support of Bob Dole?

Mr. ICKES: We would like the support of Bob Dole. The president is working very hard over these past weeks, and will continue to do so, reaching out towards Republicans. As you know, he's meeting with Senator Moynihan and Senator Packwood this Tuesday. He has been in touch and will be increasingly in touch with Republicans as well as with Democrats as this process goes down the line. We think that most members of the Congress understand that the American people want action this year on universal coverage.

Mr. RUSSERT: But could you pass a bill without Bob Dole?

Mr. ICKES: Is it possible? I think it certainly is possible. Do we want Republican support? Yes. Do we expect Republican support? Yes.

Mr. BRODER: You heard Senator Breaux say it's the fourth quarter, and it's time that all the players be on the field. Is he right about that?

Mr. ICKES: Well, I'm not sure what he meant by that. I think all players are, in fact, on the field. The president and the first lady and top members of the administration have been fully engaged in this process. The president has—is meeting on and phoning on a consistent basis with relevant members of Congress, meeting with them, as is the first lady, as are other members of the administration. This administration is fully engaged. On the other hand, we are not micromanaging this legislative process. That is not the president's job, to micromanage. This is a congressional process. We are providing information, we are providing help, and we are making—the president is making his case.

Mr. BRODER: The senator's point is that unless the president begins to get in there and actually say, yes, I will accept this compromise; no, I will not accept that one, those deals can't be made.

Mr. ICKES: Again, I think that time is too early, Mr. Broder, and I also heard the senator say that the president and top members of the administration were becoming increasingly involved. I know, as a fact, because I'm involved in it every day, that they, the president, the first lady and others have been very, very much involved and will become increasingly so. But, again, this is a matter of timing, and Senator Moynihan has just initiated his proposal and his committee.

Mr. BRODER: I'd like to get your reaction specifically to the plan that Senator Breaux has put forward with the so-called triggers, that legislation would be passed this year, that said if by 1998 or 1999, a specific percentage of the uninsured have not been covered, then the mandates would come into effect. Is that approach acceptable to the administration?

Mr. ICKES: We're not prepared at this point to comment on various different proposals. The only way that we can start to look at this is look at a bill in a totality. It is impossible at this point to start discussing individual aspects of individual proposals. There are going to be many, many proposals going through, as there have been, in the various committees. I suspect that there will be a number of different proposals before this process in the Senate Finance Committee has ended, and what counts at the end of the process is, what does the bill look like as a totality? Does it, first and foremost, provide universal coverage and does it provide

an adequate basis for financing it and does it provide for cost control and other elements? But to now comment on specific proposals this early in the process, the Senate Finance Committee, I think, is not, at this point, relevant.

Mr. BROWNSTEIN: Mr. Ickes, let me ask you of another one of your responsibilities at the White House, which is the midterm congressional elections coming up. Democrats just lost a congressional seat in Kentucky that they held for over 100 years. They lost a special election in Oklahoma. Last year, they lost governors' races in Virginia and New Jersey as well as mayoral seats in overwhelmingly Democratic cities of New York and LA. Is there a pattern developing here the Democrats have to be worried about as they look forward to this November?

Mr. ICKES: I don't think there's a pattern developing yet. I think it's, first, much too early to start making predictions about 1994. These midterm elections are not going to be national referendums. They're going to be referendums district by district, legislator by legislator, governor by governor. I think the legislators are going to go home, stand for election based on their record. The record of this administration is the most productive record in the last 30 years according to some authorities. An enormous amount of legislation has come out and will continue to come out. We have health care up, we have a crime bill that's coming through. Welfare reform is going to be introduced at least this year. We have campaign finance reform on the Hill, etc. It's going to be that legislative agenda—and then there was the legislative agenda of last year—lowering deficits, etc. It's going to be that agenda that individual legislators will go home and run on. That's a Clinton agenda, to a great extent, helped greatly by the Congress.

Mr. BROWNSTEIN: So are you then—are you saying that you want to encourage Democrats to make this midterm election or referendum on the first two years on the accomplishments of the Clinton presidency?

Mr. ICKES: No, I'm not saying that. I'm saying just the opposite, that this is not—I would not look at the midterm elections as a national referendum. It is district by district and those—each district has its own peculiarities. But what I am saying is that the legislators will go home and run on their record. That record has been laid out last year and is being

continued to be laid out this year. And that is primarily a Clinton agenda and a Clinton record.

Mr. BROWNSTEIN: The political director of the Democratic National Committee said this week that there are clearly some areas of the country where it is not going to benefit a candidate to associate himself with Bill Clinton, and if you want us to stay away, we'll stay away. Now, after that, his boss, David Wilhelm, and people at the White House came down on him with both feet. But wasn't he just saying the obvious, that there are parts of this country where Bill Clinton isn't popular, and it will be to a candidate's advantage to emphasize his differences with him?

Mr. ICKES: Well, I think that those statements were retracted.

Mr. BROWNSTEIN: Which statements—the criticisms or his statement?

Mr. ICKES: No, no. No, his statements—Mr. Sweitzer's statements were retracted.

Mr. BROWNSTEIN: Do you think he's wrong, that there are going to be candidates around this country, in areas of the country, Democratic candidates who are not going to find it to their advantage to tie themselves closer to the White House?

Mr. ICKES: I think the candidates are going to tie themselves to the record they have accumulated in the Congress, and that is essentially a very broad record, a record of change and progress, and that is basically a record that has been initiated, supported and pushed by this president.

Mr. RUSSERT: Mr. Ickes, our next guest, Bob Woodward, wrote this book, *The Agenda*, which I know has been well read at the White House. It's a chronicle of the first year of the administration. What has the White House learned from this book?

Mr. ICKES: I think what the country has learned, Mr. Russert, is what the White House has known, is that we have a very engaged president who has come in, tackled very tough problems and has made very tough choices, and as a result of an economic program that is the subject of this book, has resulted in lowering interest rates, three million new jobs since he took office, has dealt, I think, very well with lowering trade barriers, taken on

some tough issues like NAFTA, has moved GATT forward. I think that what that book really shows is the internal workings of a White House making very difficult policy, and what is refreshing about the book and what, in my mind, is heartening about the book is that you have a chief executive who is very engaged, very knowledgeable and is willing to step up to the plate and make very tough decisions. That's what that book shows, and I think that's a good thing for the country to read.

Mr. RUSSERT: So you're pleased that many members of the White House staff spent so much time talking to Mr. Woodward?

Mr. ICKES: I think that, you know, people have talked to Mr. Woodward, obviously, but I think the lesson to be drawn from this book, as I said, is the fact this president has taken on very tough issues and is very engaged.

Mr. RUSSERT: But what about some of the criticisms of the conduct of the White House staff—chaos is a word that's used frequently; the president labeling his own middle class tax cut a turkey; the deputy director of the OMB saying you're well aware of the size of the deficit, but try to fake it. Some of the criticisms—are they being taken in a constructive way?

Mr. ICKES: Tim, if everything that you said or I said or David said and offhand comments were printed—I mean, I don't think it has any relevance. I think what is relevant is what has resulted. And what has resulted is a serious economic program. He came in early in his administration, decided to tackle a very large deficit. It was left by his predecessors, and has dealt with that successfully. Deficit reduction over the three years—first time in 50 years that that's occurred.

Mr. RUSSERT: Mr. Ickes, we thank you for joining us this morning on MEET THE PRESS.

Mr. ICKES: Thank you.

Mr. RUSSERT: And in a moment, we'll talk to the author of this book, Bob Woodward, coming up next.

(Announcements)

Mr. RUSSERT: Bob Woodward, welcome. Let's talk about your book, "The Agenda." How many people at the White House did you

speak with, and what were the conditions of the interviews, whether they were off the record, background?

Mr. WOODWARD: They were on background. It was clearly stated that I would use everything, but not name the source in the book.

Mr. RUSSERT: And how many people did you talk to?

Mr. WOODWARD: More than 250 people in the White House, the various departments, Federal Reserve and Congress.

Mr. RUSSERT: Now you have said that you will put the tapes of the conversations that you made in the Yale University library, and 40 years from now they will be made public. Some...

Mr. WOODWARD: Right.

Mr. RUSSERT: ...folks at the White House have said to me they never knew those tapes would be made public.

Mr. WOODWARD: I've received no complaints about that at all. And this is the year 2034, that they would be made public. I, you know, if...

Mr. BRODER: George Stephanopoulos will be almost 50 by then.

Mr. RUSSERT: If anyone objected...

Mr. WOODWARD: I think George Stephanopoulos would be in his 70s and be collecting Social Security, if we still have it.

Mr. RUSSERT: If anyone objected, would you change those terms?

Mr. WOODWARD: I certainly would talk with them. And if anyone had a serious objection, I would make some modification.

Mr. RUSSERT: The other concern raised is that when you promised someone it is off the record or for background, they hope to keep it that way, that before you went on "60 Minutes," you let Mike Wallace hear some of the tapes. How do you make that judgment?

Mr. WOODWARD: Somebody I've known for a long time—was all done in confidence. Again, nothing is leaked out. I don't disclose my

sources. And in this book and in the Clinton White House—in fact, in any White House—there is a documentary paper trail of meeting notes, briefing books, diaries, and I got that kind of access, and without disclosing sources, was able to show it to people and make it clear to them that this is all true. No one is disputing anything in the book at this point, as you know.

Mr. RUSSERT: I've talked to several people at the White House. No one is disputing any facts. There have been some grumblings that, "Hey, I talked to Bob Woodward. I didn't mean to talk to Mike Wallace."

Mr. WOODWARD: Well, they didn't. Don't worry.

Mr. RUSSERT: The book overall—we just we just heard Harold Ickes, the deputy White House chief of staff, say it shows an engaged presidency, and—what is—two questions: What is the most distressing thing you've learned about the Clinton presidency, and what's the best thing you learned about the Clinton presidency?

Mr. WOODWARD: Well, you know, this is a reporting book. And it turns out that it happens to be about this kind of unending contest for the definition of Clinton's presidency, among his aides, advisers, his wife, cabinet people and within himself. He's a very complicated, to many people a very compelling figure; to other people, somebody who has not yet learned to manage the presidency. So I don't sit in judgment; I just try to describe it.

Mr. RUSSERT: Have you figured out who is Bill Clinton?

Mr. WOODWARD: Well, that's the question, and the interest in this book, other than the economic questions, and some of the more sensational details, is the public, I think, is very confused about Clinton. Hillary Clinton herself has told people that her husband's style creates dissonance, that it's confusing. And I think the country is confused, and—about where he is taking the country, his office, himself, is it's very much on people's minds, and it should be.

Mr. RUSSERT: Ron Brownstein, you've read the book. Is Bill Clinton a liberal or a new Democrat?

Mr. BROWNSTEIN: Well, I—first of all, I think it's a terrific book. It was a great read. And I think that the one criticism I have of it is that it doesn't, I think, emphasize enough the outside political contacts that he was dealing with, in the sense that the shift from the campaign agenda, that was more public investment focused toward the deficit reduction agenda, was not only, I think, developed by the internal ascendance of the deficit hawks. The fact is that the external political environment simply demanded it. On the day that Bill Clinton was elected, 56 percent of those polled in the exit poll said they wanted less government and less services, not more government and more services. And the force that pushed him toward emphasizing the deficit, I think, was essentially irresistible. If he put forward the campaign plan that he ran on, he would have—I think he would have had even a rougher time last year than he did as displayed in your book.

Mr. RUSSERT: Before you respond...

Mr. WOODWARD: Sure.

Mr. RUSSERT: ...we have to take a quick break for a commercial. We'll be right back.

(Announcements)

Mr. RUSSERT: We're back, talking with Bob Woodward. David Broder, you had a comment?

Mr. BRODER: Ickes has a point, doesn't he, Bob, when he says that if a reporter like you went to work on NBC News or the *LA Times* or even our beloved paper, that a lot of what you would find in the decision-making is chaos?

Mr. WOODWARD: Often it is. This is a level of chaos and indecision as is outlined in kind of minute detail like I've never seen it in a White House before, or any other organization. Now, at the same time, Clinton made the point in responding to the book, 'Hey, that's the way I work. That's me. I want to hear all the views. I want to reconsider.' It's kind of the non-stop presidency. And everything's on the table all the time.

Mr. RUSSERT: What did Bismarck say? If you like sausage, don't watch it being made?

Mr. WOODWARD: Well, but it's our government, and we'd better watch it being made.

Mr. RUSSERT: Bob Woodward, thank you for joining us. Ron Brownstein, David Broder, thank you all.

Join Elizabeth Vargas for the "NBC Nightly News" tonight. Start your day tomorrow on "Today." And all week on the "NBC Nightly News With Tom Brokaw," an in-depth look at what the American people really want in health-care reform.

That's all for today. We'll be back next week. If it's Sunday, it's MEET THE PRESS.

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