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MEET THE PRESS

WITH TIM RUSBERT

MR. RUSSERT: Do you think President Clinton's honest?

Sunday, July 14, 1996

SEN. LOTT: You know, all I know is he says that he wants to get welfare reform, but when we send it to him, he vetoes it.

SEN. DASCHLE: Well, that's because it's an extreme bill, Trent.

SEN. LOTT: He says he wants a balanced budget amendment, but when we send it to him, he vetoes it. I mean, it's hard for me to justify when he's saying one thing, and he's doing another. Because if his words and his actions don't match, now, Tim, now how do you describe that?

SEN. DASCHLE: If the Republicans would come to the middle, the president wouldn't have any trouble signing these bills. It's when they go off the deep end on the right that the president has no choice but to veto the bills. Go to the middle and you'll see signatures. The minimum wage is a very good example.

MR. RUSSERT: Let me close on an issue that there is a discussion, debate within the Republican Party. Senator Lott, the Republicans in the House have said they will cut off all funding for the National Endowment of the Arts next year. Cut it off, period. Eliminate, totally. There are some Republicans in the Senate that are saying, "No, no, no." We want language guaranteeing that funding for the National Endowment for the Arts will go forward. Where do you stand?

SEN. LOTT: Well, first of all, I think you need to note that the House does provide funding this year for the National Endowment for the Arts, and Senator Slade Gorton in the Senate has done a good job on that.

MR. RUSSERT: But should it continue beyond this year?

SEN. LOTT: I think that support for the arts from the people's taxpayers' dollars should be phased out over a reasonable period of time. I think that should be done in the private sector. I support the arts and music. I love the music and the arts and Mississippi has more than its fair share. But to have the federal government as the prime source of financial support, I think, is questionable.

SEN. DASCHLE: I think that's extremism again. I don't see any reason why the American people working as a community can't foster the arts. I think that's in part what this country's all about. It isn't just how strong our economy, but what kind of people we are. And I think the American people, through their government, ought to have the opportunity to encourage and to find ways with which to ensure that we have a flourishing arts community in this country.

SEN. LOTT: You know, I don't impugn Tom Daschle's integrity when he disagrees with me, but when he disagrees with me, he calls it extremism. I gave a very calm, rational answer to a good question and I don't appreciate his response.

SEN. DASCHLE: Well, I must say, I wasn't--this isn't anything personal because, Trent, it's a very...

SEN. LOTT: Well, I mean, you said that was extremism. I mean, I don't think...

SEN. DASCHLE: It was. Well, I believe it is extremism.

(CONT.)

Meet the Press (NBC News) - Sunday, July 14, 1996

SEN. LOTT: Jeez.

SEN. DASCHLE: I don't know what else to call it. It's extreme when you say you're going to abolish entirely, the arts program in this country.

SEN. LOTT: I didn't say that. I didn't say that at all.

SEN. DASCHLE: I think that's extremism. You said there would not be any federal funding.

SEN. LOTT: See, there again, he's putting words in my mouth that I didn't say.

MR. RUSSERT: Right. To be continued. Gentlemen, I hope you can get together tomorrow morning.

SEN. LOTT: We'll try it, Tim.

SEN. DASCHLE: We will. You bet.

MR. RUSSERT: Senator Lott, Senator Daschle, thanks very much for a most interesting discussion.

SEN. DASCHLE: Thanks.

MR. RUSSERT: Coming next, a roundtable with the political odd couple James Carville and Mary Matalin and then our MEET THE PRESS Minute, with the late John Chancellor.

(Announcements)

MR. RUSSERT: And we're back on MEET THE PRESS. Here they are, James Carville, Mary Matalin. Welcome back.

MS. MATALIN: You notice the closer we get to the elections, the more stuff we bring to substantiate our...

MR. CARVILLE: Yeah, there's a sp--there's a sterling operation.

MR. RUSSERT: All right. All right.

MR. CARVILLE: Man, the fax machine is about to burn up.

MR. RUSSERT: All right, Mary Matalin, the Dole campaign. Even his closest friends have told me over the last week things have not gone well.

MS. MATALIN: Look, Tim, you know, you've been following politics for a long time. The Washington Post reported this morning the Dole team has nine policy people, the Clinton team has 1.9 million people working for it. The entire government, a fully funded DNC, a fully funded re-election committee, no primary opposition, a White House that is spitting out policy objectives once a week, regardless of what the costs are and regardless of any intention to implement them.

MR. RUSSERT: George Bush had all that.