



Full Transcript of Interview with Representative Dennis Kucinich
by Link TV Political Correspondent Mark Hertsgaard
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(Background on Link TV's PEOPLE'S VOICE series at end)

Mark Hertsgaard: Welcome to the People's Voice: Election 2004. I'm Mark Hertsgaard in San Francisco. With me is Presidential candidate Dennis Kuchinich, the former mayor of Cleveland, now serving his fourth term in the U.S. House of Representatives from Ohio. Welcome, Congressman Kuchinich.

Rep. Kucinich: Thank you very much, Mark. Good to be here with you.

Mark Hertsgaard: Happy to have you. And you've recently had cause to complain about the mainstream media's tendency to focus on polls and endorsements and fundraising instead of focusing on the real concerns of the American people. And it does sometimes seem that our colleagues want to decide who can win this election before voters have a chance to vote or even get to know you as candidates. So I promise you that this program is going to be very different from that. We're calling this program the People's Voice because our goal is to listen to you and your questions and see if we can get some answers from each of the 2004 Presidential candidates. We hope to put you, the American people, back into the political process, so we're inviting leading citizen groups to help us conduct these interviews, and they'll join me in questioning Representative Kuchinich. Throughout the program at the bottom of your screen we'll show you information on how to get further involved in this election. It's your democracy but democracy is not a spectator sport. Now, let's get started. Congressman, you've been a strong critic of the Bush Administration's war in Iraq. Saddam Hussein has now been captured, how does that effect your view of what the United States should be doing in Iraq.

Rep. Kucinich: Well, this is the moment we need to seize and go to the world community in the cause of international cooperation, take to the U.N. a new resolution where the United States would give up control of the oil, any hopes to privatize the Iraq economy, hand over to the U.N. the contracting process and the responsibility for developing a new constitution and a governance in Iraq that would enable us to establish a context where we could get U.N. peacekeepers in and get the United States out. We must end the occupation and we much bring our troops home, and seize the moment and take a new direction.

Mark Hertsgaard: You said you want U.S. troops out by the end of the year and to replace them with U.N. troops as you just said. But [Koffi Anan], the General Secretary of the U.N., has

said recently we're not going to go back in. Many other foreign nations, as you know, were strong critics of this war, very unlikely to send their troops there. If the U.N. and other nations will not send peacekeeping troops to Iraq, do you still believe that the U.S. should pull out?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, first of all my plan, which is on my Web site at Kuchinich.us and has been there for two months, calls for U.N. peacekeepers to come in before the United States would leave and there would have to be 90 days after the U.N. would approve such a resolution would be the point at which I would like to see the pull out completed. However, you're correct. At this moment, the U.N. has no interest. Now we have to ask why the U.N. has no interest, because at this point the United States is still trying to hold control of the oil, is trying to privatize the Iraq economy, is engaged in a, in a contracting process that is less than honorable and is trying to set up a government in Iraq which they can run by remote control from Washington. Under those circumstances, the U.N. has no compelling interest to try to endorse what is a United States policy which a good number of our former, of our allies have found to be objectionable. So, what I'm suggesting is we take a new approach, which embraces the world community, which step away from unilateralism and pre-emption and which enables us to confirm that only international cooperation will, will enable the stabilization of Iraq and will enable America to be more effective in our effort to meet the challenge of terrorism around the world.

Mark Hertsgaard: Well, with Bush having captured Saddam, doesn't that strengthen his hand in such a way that he won't likely do that?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, I think it would be a folly to proceed with that assumption because the fact of the matter is that the insurgency still remains a major challenge, that elements that have promoted the insurgency are not necessarily connected to Saddam Hussein, that there's a whole range of reasons why our troops are still under attack in Iraq and why the violence will not be quelled. I think it's fair to say that the United States' presence in Iraq is in and of itself a destabilizing factor and for that reason it is urgent that we seize this moment to reach out to the world community so that we can find a means of extricating ourselves from this so that we don't have greater casualties, so that we don't have more innocent people killed and we don't have a greater loss of tax dollars which American people need to fund programs for health and housing and education here at home.

Mark Hertsgaard: You've criticized President Bush on the war, repeatedly. Accused him of lying about Saddam's alleged weapons of mass destruction, about his ties to al-Quaeda, you've called for Defense Secretary Rumsfeld's removal. Do you believe that President Bush's lies warrant him being impeached for lying about a war that has now killed hundreds of Americans, wounded thousands, killed untold numbers of Iraqis, should George Bush be impeached for this?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, I'm going to answer the question this way. First of all let's review the misstatements, mischaracterizations and lies that were told to the American people. Saddam Hussein had nothing to do with 9-11. Iraq had nothing to do with al-Quaeda's role in 9-11, with the Anthrax attack upon this country, they did not have weapons of mass destruction. They had neither the intention or the capability of attacking this country. We're trying to get weapons from [Niger]. So what were we doing with this invasion? We attacked a country which did not

attack us. Now having said that, I don't think an impeachment at this point would be productive for this country. First of all, as a matter of practical politics, there's not going to be the votes in the House to be able to deliver any articles. Secondly, there won't be the votes in the Senate to deliver a conviction. And I think that third, why go through the exercise when we're right at the verge of a presidential election. Let the people of this country decide, not 535 of the Congress of the United States. So I'd say that such talk is really misdirected and not productive and we that we need to stay focused on this election campaign and not get into what I think are the, are the issues that relate to the veracity of this administration in the context of an impeachment discussion. I'm not interested in that at all. I'm running for President to give the American people a real choice and let the American people be the judge of whether or not this administration has been truthful with them.

Mark Hertsgaard: Let's hear a question from a member of the American people. I believe it's from Mr. John Gould in Strausberg, PA, a bureau of LinkTV.

Q: Hello, my name is John Gould, a professor of chemistry at East Strausberg University in northeastern Pennsylvania. My question would be the following: When I was young, President Kennedy committed the country to sending a man to the moon by the decades end which at that time was a seemingly impossible task, but our country committed enormous resources, both human and financial, to do so and was successful. My question is would you be willing to make a similar commitment of the country's talents and resources and actually put a date to the end of our dependence on petroleum and thereby bring true security by the available of renewable and clean energy for our country and our world?

Rep. Kucinich: Thank you, Professor, for that question. And you're right, President Kennedy showed what positive leadership can do in setting goals and an expanded vision for America. I intend to do the same thing with respect to achieving energy independence. The path we take must be one towards sustainability and the only way that we can achieve sustainability is to promote the development of renewable energy, and we already know that we have the potential of solar, wind, green hydrogen, geo-thermal, biomass and other forms of energy that we can rely on to take us on a path towards a 20% renewal energy portfolio by the year 2010. Furthermore, we have to [incentivize] the development of such technologies and provide disincentives for the development of coal, oil and nuclear energy. So my administration will sound the kind of [clarion] call which President Kennedy gave to put someone on the moon to help us achieve the energy independence through renewable energy, sustainability and through energy conservation, and that's something I would involved the American people in right in their homes. Thank you.

Mark Hertsgaard: Let's talk a little bit about green jobs. You've talked about wanting a green jobs program, not just fixing the environment but using that to fix our economy.

Rep. Kucinich: Well, we have to realize that the progressive business persons of the future see that pollution going up the smokestacks as lost profits. That it is the innovative technologies which will enable businesses to conserve their resources and their materials and to convert might be pollution in one era into a product in another era. And I think it's that new thinking which doesn't create the dichotomy between the environment and, and economic progress which sees

environmental progress and, and the protection of the environment as being mutually inclusion. And so we should, you know, this is a time for such new thinking. And there are people already in industries and in businesses across this country who are capitalizing on this idea of including sustainability with economic growth.

Mark Hertsgaard: Talk a little bit, if you will, about how exactly that would happen, because I've heard George W. Bush say, we know now that the environment and the economy don't have to be enemies, and that's certainly not the policy that he's followed. How would it be different under a Kucinich administration?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, we'd enforce the Clean Air and Clean Water Act. That's number one. We have an Environmental Protection Agency. We would make sure that the country was put on a path towards sustainable energy. We would have our international policies reflective of that as well. We'd make sure our trade agreements reflective respect for and adherence to environmental quality principles. Right now NAFTA and the WTO do not have, as basic underlying principles, the protection of the environment. As a matter of fact, environmental laws are seen, are seen to be barriers to trade. So we need to cancel NAFTA and the WTO and go back to bilateral trade which would be conditioned on worker's rights, human rights and the environment. And our responsibility then to the global environment will be a more effectively enhanced. Furthermore, I expect the United States, and as president, will sign the Kyoto Climate Change Treaty. That must go hand in hand with a move towards renewable energy and for sustainability.

Mark Hertsgaard: And how does that create jobs?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, it creates jobs by putting America on a track towards, towards creating the new technologies. Where the economic growth is going to be, in the next 10-20 years, is going to be in creating jobs that are based on new energy technologies which promote sustainability and renewable energy. We can't even imagine some of these technologies now, that's why what I want to do is to [incentivize] the production of new technologies through the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. They're been responsible for a marvelous number of spin-offs in telecommunications, in propulsions and materials, in medicine, and if we focus this inventive genius of the kind that the Professor related to in his question on our capacity to develop new solutions to the challenges of our time which relate to the damage to the environment, we can grow the economy and improve the environment at the same time and that's what we need to be looking at. Again, this idea of separating ourselves from nature is very dangerous, because what we're doing, we're ruining the planet, we're ruining the context in which we need to, to live. And so my administration will be about the, what [Thomas Berry] called "the great work." Reconciling ourselves with nature and doing it in a way that can be productive of not only our survival as a species, but can be productive of unfolding the beauty of this world and economy progress as well. We can have it bo, we can have it all.

Mark Hertsgaard: Let's talk a little more about jobs, because that's always a big issue when American's are choosing a president. I went on your Web site, looked at your green jobs programs. It talks about creating two million jobs, which is a lot, but as you know the official unemployment now in this country is nine million people who are not able to find work. As

president, in addition to government programs, like a green jobs program, what would you do to encourage the private sector and the private economy to create jobs for those millions of people who are still out of work?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, there's a number of areas we can work in. First of all, I mentioned earlier, again, energy technologies, that's where the big growth is going to come over the next 10-20 years. I'm for providing incentives to do that, for the development of solar, green, you know, green hydrogen, geo-thermal, wind, biomass. We can provide incentives for that. I'm also for using the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to create the alpha stage technologies so that they can...

Mark Hertsgaard: What is an "alpha stage" technology?

Rep. Kucinich: It's the first, it's the first research level. It's the development. It's where, it's the incubator. NASA can serve as an incubator, and it does in small pilot projects. NASA can serve as an incubator for new technologies, and we can then go to the private sector and offer them, for, for to either license or to sell them to the private sector, so they can create new industries. I mean, that's how we can, we can provide incentives for creating the jobs of the future and inspire new growth in our economy. Now there's another side to the loss of jobs that we have to think about. As corporations have grown more and more powerful they have tended to improve their stock position by shedding thousands of employees. What we need to do is to have more competition in our economy and that's going to mean enforcement of the Sherman and Clayton Anti-Trust Acts, as well as the work of the Federal Trade Commission in studying vertical and horizontal integration in various market segments, so that we can make it possible for there to be real competition in the economy and not the kind of contraction of the economy that's happening through monopolization.

Mark Hertsgaard: So, you'd stop corporations from getting bigger?

Rep. Kucinich: Oh, yes. Absolutely. And we need to do that. Because what we're finding is that as corporations keep getting bigger and bigger there's less accountability to the public and there's a lot of jobs being lost and it's not necessarily improving in any way the economic condition of this country, although it might be enhancing the narrow economic concerns of corporations. Government has a vital role to play in regulating the activity of corporations. Take, for example, Enron. Just think if we had been more effective in regulating the affairs of Enron, you wouldn't have had the State of California being in such financial trouble, having to borrow money to cover the cost of increases of wholesale power. You wouldn't have so many people losing their investments and losing their futures because they put their faith in the, in the management of Enron. I mean, so what I'm saying is there's a new role for government here and it's one of being an active participant in the management of, and the cooperative management of the economy.

Mark Hertsgaard: Let's take another question from one of our viewers. This is John Kinsman from the National Family Farm Coalition. We'll take his question now.

Q: Hello. I am John Kinsman. I am a family dairy farmer from southcentral Wisconsin. In the past few years a whole wave of mergers and acquisitions have concentrated the power of food or the control over the food system in the hands of just a few. This brings much lower prices to me as a farmer and higher prices for consumers. We dairy farmers are in particular suffering. Our work economic crisis since the Great Depression. So, with that in mind would you as President be willing to enforce some of the laws that are already on the books in Congress that would assure fair prices for farmers and, also, which would bring fair prices for consumers.

Rep. Kucinich: Mr. Kinsman, as I've travelled across this country and met with farmers they've said the exact same thing that you have said. Farmers want to be able to get a fair price and they want to be able to get their product to market. And the major impediment to that is the monopolization of markets in terms of agricultural products we've seen, from seed to shelf, markets have been tied up and its enabled, it has actually crushed a lot of small and medium-sized family farms in this country. As President of the United States, I will break up the monopolies in agriculture, those monopolies which control so many segments of our agricultural economy have to be broken up and we have to enforce the Sherman and Clayton Anti-Trust Acts, and have the Federal Trade Commission involved in studying the market segments. I want to make sure that you can survive, but you're not going to do that unless you have a president who's willing to use the power of the Justice Department to take the side of family farmers, and I fully intend to do that.

Mark Hertsgaard: They're not going to like that very much on the monopolists side. You've had experience in your political career back as the mayor of Cleveland tangling with big business. As president, how will you fight those anti-trust battles and survive?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, first of all, it's correct, I do have experience in these matters. Twenty-five years ago I saved a municipal electrical system from a takeover by a private utility monopoly whose banking partner tried to force me to sell the system in exchange for the city's credit. I took a stand for the public interest and was vindicated in Cleveland as a mayor who stood up for the people. A president must stand up for the people, too. It's not only about agriculture, which Mr. Kinsman very clearly understands the import of, but it's also about health insurance. Insurance companies are defeating the interests of the American people for health care. They were basically rationing health care based on ability to pay. It's about the pharmaceutical companies who are increasingly charging a price for prescription drugs that is creating desperation among senior citizens. I'll be the president who takes up the challenge of defining the public interest, through the office of the presidency, and saying that we must transit from a system of for-profit health care to a not-for-profit health care. Medicare for all. HR 676 is the bill that I pa, worked on with John [Counters] to achieve that. So, whether it's, it's challenging the power of the pharmaceutical companies, of the health insurance companies, of big ag, of the energy companies, Americans want a president who can represent them and that's where I come from. I mean, I, I there's no strings attached here. There's not a key in my back that somebody turns in the morning and winds me up and sends me in a direction according to a certain interest group. People want a president they can call their own, they're going to vote for me.

Mark Hertsgaard: And how do you win those fights in Congress? As you know, you serve in Congress, pharmaceutical industry, big agriculture, they shower campaign contributions on people there and a lot of wonderful ideas die [a burning] in Congress. How do you actually take your rhetoric and turn it into reality as president?

Rep. Kucinich: In 1932 this country was faced with serious economic problems with millions of people out of work, with people having lost their investments in their businesses, and Franklin Roosevelt as a candidate for president went to the American people and asked them to give him a Congress that would make it possible to enact broad reforms, and the American people responded magnificently. They elected 88 new members of the House and 13 new members of the Senate, which created the basis for the New Deal. My candidacy will work to inspire the American people, to ask them to give this country a Congress which will give people health care for all, jobs for all, education for all, affordable housing for all, peace. To create a new context for this nation. That's what an election ought to be about. It ought to be about an encompassing vision of what a nation can be that resonates with the hopes of our founders in the preamble of the Constitution when they talked about the, our tasks in order to create a more perfect union. So we must ever be about that idea of trying to perfect this, this union of states.

Mark Hertsgaard: Let me ask you a little bit of a devil's advocate question here. A group in Washington called the Center for Public Integrity is going to publish a book next month called "The Buying on the President 2004." Looks at all of you candidates. Traces who have been your biggest campaign contributors throughout your political career, not just in this race but over your time in public life. The book lists your ten biggest contributors. Nine of the ten are labor unions. As president, will you be beholden to labor unions and will you also be able to work with business in a cooperative way.

Rep. Kucinich: Well, first of all, there was some disclosure needed here. I'm not a missionary to labor. I come from the house of labor, and I fully intend to have worker's rights enshrined in a worker's White House: the right to organize, the right to collective bargaining, the right to strike, the right to decent wages and benefits, the right to a safe workplace, the right to a secure retirement, the right to participate in a political process. Now do I come by that because my father was a truck driver? It helps. But I also come by it because, you know, I happen to be a member of the AFL-CIO, a member of the cameramen's union, thank you, and someone who understands the aspirations of working men and women. When I worked at the Plain Dealer, years ago, I was a member of the American Newspaper Guild. When I worked at Channel 8 in Cleveland, I was a member of the American Federation of Radio and Television Artists. And now I'm a member of the IATSE. I think that worker's rights are human rights and they connect us to the grand purposes of government in trying to sustain the quality of life for all people. So, I would have no trouble whatsoever in working with business as long as business understands that it has a responsibility to pay people a living wage, as long as business understands that it has the responsibility to make sure that people when they're on the job have certain rights, as long as business understands that it needs to create a safe workplace, we'll have a marvelous working relationship with business. But business needs to know that there'll be an American president who has no hesitation to defend the rights of workers. That's what my Labor Department will be about, that's what the National Labor Relations board will be about, that's what the policies of this administration will be about with respect to trade agreements, and, and frankly I think it's

time that we really live Lincoln's prayer of a government of the people, by the people and for the people. And it's quite possible that includes a president from the people.

Mark Hertsgaard: And can you imagine any time then, when the interests of labor or working people might be different than the interests of the nation?

Rep. Kucinich: No. Actually the job of a president is to balance and to harmonize the concerns of the entire country. And I'm very independent politically. But the reason why working men and women have supported my campaign is because I've supported them. And the rights of workers ought to be of paramount concern. Let's look what's happened in this economy: 250 corporations had to restate their earnings last year; we had massive fraud on Wall St. with respect to mutual funds; we had the Enrons and the Worldcoms and the Global Crossings and all of these corporations that have not been true to their stockholders. I'm going to be a president that makes sure that Wall St. works for people, that there's enforcement of the Securities and Exchange Commission laws, that when somebody gives a stockholder or an investor a statement that it better be true. There's going to be real accountability. So I will work to make sure that the engines of our economy are real, that they're running in a way that's finely tuned, that, that there's not any misrepresentation going on, because that's what hurts this country, that's what makes people lose face, faith in an economic system which ought to be working. But if the government walks off from its responsibility, it's like a cop walking off the beat. We need to be there to make sure that these, that these big corporations are saying and doing what they, what they aver. And I'm, as president, will make sure we protect investors, that, will provide for a much healthier business climate frankly than we have right now.

Mark Hertsgaard: Let's turn now from another question from a LinkTV viewer, Kim McMillan here in California.

Q: Hi, my name is Kim McMillan and I'm from Merced, CA. I would like to know will my vote count? After the voting irregularities that took place in Florida in the 2000 election do you believe that current voting machines are the answer?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, we have a responsibility to make sure that your vote counts. And after the experience in Florida there are many Americans who are wondering whether or not we have the ability to run an election right. The new technologies which you speak of are technologies that need to be monitored. I co-sponsored a bill with Congressman Russ Holt of New Jersey to, to look at the issues of making sure the public interest in protected in new election technologies. I think we have to have a source code which is created not by corporate interests, that the government must be involved in with, under transparent conditions.

Mark Hertsgaard: What is a source code?

Rep. Kucinich: Source code is what you would use to write the program.

Mark Hertsgaard: Um-huh.

Rep. Kucinich: And the program...

Mark Hertsgaard: For electronic voting?

Rep. Kucinich: For electronic voting. And it, that source code must be created under transparent conditions. You just can't have any corporate decide that it's going to provide the program for an election without any accountability or any transparency. We need to make sure and people are concerned that no election will, will proceed where the results are pre-programmed. We want to make sure that there's an audit trail, a paper trail. People have to have the confidence in the electoral process, and it's particularly important in light of what happened in Florida in 2000. We set up on our Web site at Kucinich.us, it's in development actually, a, a planned, what we called the national elections board, which is a, a system by which we create a checklist for people to check at their local boards of elections, ask about what kind of technology is being used, when was it purchased, who was it purchased from, issues of transparency, can you see how it works, has it been tested, have there been any flaws? So we're going to create some information sharing around the country so people will know the questions to ask long and, you know, far in advance of any election. But the security of the ballot is, is essential. Those questions have to be raised but they have to be raised really on a county by county basis so we know the kinds of technologies that are being used and what kind of safeguards must be put in place.

Mark Hertsgaard: But do citizens themselves have to go around raising it county by county...?

Rep. Kucinich: Oh, absolutely. Are you kidding? I mean, after what happened in Florida in 2000? We can't take this, our franchise for granted. Only through...

Mark Hertsgaard: But I mean, does it have to be actual citizens doing it? Shouldn't this be the job of, of the government to make sure that our elections are fair and safe?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, you would think, you would think. But I, we're calling this project a national elections board which is really about public activists who are concerned getting some guidance as to the direction they can take to insure that the integrity of the elections in their own communities will be assured.

Mark Hertsgaard: What about this company out of, I believe, your home state of Ohio, DeBold, that ah...? What can you tell us about them? They are, I understand, are involved with doing a lot of this electronic voting and yet, the head of the company is a big contributor to President Bush?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, that's one of the concerns that has been raised. In addition to that, students at Swarthmore released some memos that related to the possibility that certain technical deficiencies in this system were covered up. This is something...

Mark Hertsgaard: But how do we make sure that that's fix before November?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, first of all you call it to public attention. And the more people are involved in asking the questions in a community by community basis, the better the opportunity there will be that the elections going to be run in a fair way. But if we don't know, if people don't know what kind of technology's out there, if people are not aware who the vendors are, if people are not aware of the problems, then election day is too late to find out. So we have some time here in various states to be able to raise the right questions and that's what our national election board, ah, effort on our Web site is about.

Mark Hertsgaard: Let's stay with domestic policy here for a little bit. You were talking before about corporations and their responsibility to be good corporate citizens. As you know, U.S. corporations are supposed to pay 35% tax to the federal government on any profits they make. And yet, in recent years, about 250 of our largest and most profitable corporations have actually paid only 20%, not 35%, 20%. And among the biggest tax evaders have been big name companies like General Motors, Texaco, Pepsi, J.P. Morgan. Now you said, I believe on your Web site, that any corporation that shifts profits off-shore, that is to Bermuda or some place so that they don't have to pay taxes to the United States Government, that they should not be allowed to operate in the United States. So my question to you is could you really shut down companies like Pepsi, like General Motors, if you were president and they engaged in that activity?

Rep. Kucinich: Could you shut them down?

Mark Hertsgaard: Or not allow them to operate in the United States?

Rep. Kucinich: Yeah, I think that you can sign an executive order that would make it very difficult for them to get government contracts. I think you can make it very difficult for them to get government approval for all kind of things they need with respect to trade agreements. I think that it's important to us to enter into a new era of corporate accountability. Corporations must be accountable to the public interest. They cannot operate apart from this, this country. They cannot try to have an impact on a political process in America and then expatriate their profits, sending them off-shore. I would...

Mark Hertsgaard: So you would sign those kind, that kind of executive order?

Rep. Kucinich: I would not hesitate to do what it took to take a position on behalf of the economic interest of the American people. Corporations have a responsibility. They make money. They ought to pay the taxes. You know, we, they expect their workers to pay taxes. I mean, we have a responsibility here. Why is it that workers are the ones who are, who are told over and over you better pay your taxes and then the corporations find a way to evade them. I mean, that's not fair. And it's not patriotic, by the way. It's not patriotic to America. You know, if you support this country, you do business in this country, you make money in this country, then you should pay taxes in this country. And these corporations who set up off-shore and they try to have it both way, they try to influence our political process here and they don't pay any taxes at all, they need to be exposed and they need to be told that all, the power of the federal government is going to insist that they pay their taxes, that they pay their fair share, that they not try to find a way to dodge their taxes. Enron's a good example. They set up so many different

subsidiaries out of the country, they found a way to avoid paying taxes. Well, they had great influence in our government. That's not going to happen under my administration.

Mark Hertsgaard: Is there any way, you mentioned Enron, it seems to me one of the great tragedies of our nation's recent history is the way so many retirees and families saving for college, their nest eggs disappeared in the stock market crash...

Rep. Kucinich: Absolutely right.

Mark Hertsgaard: Is there anything now, after the fact, that you as president could do, practically, to get those people their money back?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, yeah, the...

Mark Hertsgaard: Or is that gone forever?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, first of all, we have a pension benefit guarantee corporation which is designed to assure that pensioners will, will get something if their company goes down. It's not adequate, but we have to recognize what's going on here. What's going on is that corporations are looking actively for ways to jettison their pension obligations anyway they can. If it's bankruptcy court we're talking about, I want to see a change in bankruptcy law where pensioners are put on an equal footing with the banks. You know, banks go to bankruptcy court, they want to grab their money first. You know what, if pensioners are on an equal footing then maybe these companies will think twice about going bankrupt, or the banks will tell them wait, we better work something else out. I want to make sure that, that we look at, at the legal issues in these corporations where executives are taking golden parachutes while at the same time their pensioners are losing their, the assets that they worked a lifetime over a lifetime of work to help accumulate. And I want to make sure that, that we provide more protections for pensioners. People are losing their life savings because of the way the, the, because of the conduct of major corporations. But they look at...

Mark Hertsgaard: But people who've lost it. Can they get it back or are you talking about moving forward from here, that we won't let that happen again?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, they should, if there's a course of action legally, if fraud is involved, for example, I would imagine they'd have recovery if they had a Justice Department who was ready to take the side of the people. And that's what I would do, I would put the Justice Department on the side of pensioners who are being cheated out of their, or who have been cheated out of their retirement savings. You know, we need to make sure the government works for the people. And these corporations who are increasingly looking for ways to be able to, to shed their responsibilities to their workers. We'll be accountable and we'll find whatever means we have to under law, whether it's, whether it's looking at the possibility of fraud and enforcing criminal prosecution or using the Justice Department to file civil law suits to recover assets. No corporation is going to, on one hand, be able to, to cheat pensioners out of their retirement money and then turn around and set up under another name, and try to reorganize their business activities and continue to do the work that they were doing before. You know, I'm fully aware of

the games that are played, that corporations use to try to shaft their workers, and let me tell you, when I talk about having a worker's White House, I mean it. I mean that worker's retirement security is going to be paramount.

Mark Hertsgaard: Let's take a question again from one of our viewers. Very happy to have this question from our partners at Wiretap, the young zine. Linda Wang in Collegeville, PA.

Q: Hi. My name is Linda Wang. I'm a student at [Perkeman] Valley High School and a reader of Wiretap Youth Magazine. My question to you is as a member of my high school's chapter Amnesty International, I'm concerned about the Patriot Act's violations of the civil rights and liberties of Americans. What would you do as president to make sure that Americans are not stripped of their rights and privacy and that our national security is preserved?

Rep. Kucinich: When the Patriot Act was first brought to the House of Representatives I went to the floor of the House and spoke against it, I voted against it. This past year I've introduced legislation to repeal the Patriot Act.

Mark Hertsgaard: You're the only presidential candidate, I believe, who has voted against the Patriot Act.

Rep. Kucinich: That's correct. I'm the only presidential candidate who voted against the Patriot Act and who voted against the war in, in Iraq. With respect to the Patriot Act, as President of the United States, I will instruct the Justice Department to go to Federal Court and seek to overturn the Patriot Act as being unconstitutional. I see it as a violation of numerous provisions of our Bill of Rights, including our right to free speech, our right to freedom of assembly, our right to be free in our persons from unreasonable search and seizure, our right to a fair trial. All of these things are being used by the government, all of these provisions of the Patriot Act are being used by the government in such a way that creates a destructive undermining of our democracy. You know, right now, Mark, where we are is that the Patriot Act has been a cause for government to be able to grab people's reading lists. The government could go in and find out the videos that you watch, to get your financial and health information. When you think about a government that becomes more powerful where the people of the country are reduced to fear and become less powerful, that's not a definition of a democracy. And I think we need to remember where we've come from. Benjamin Franklin said that, something to the effect that those who would give up their liberties for a measure of security deserve neither. And in this country, we must remember where we come from. When we look at the Star Spangled Banner, Francis Scott Key raised the question, does that star-spangled banner yet wave, o'er the land of the free and home of the brave? He made the connection between freedom and bravery, between courage and democracy. So these are times that I will call on the courage of American people, and my election will mean the end of fear and the beginning of hope in America, so we can re-embrace the world community in a way that is effective in meeting the challenge of terrorism but in no way give up any of our basic rights. In effect, you could say that the terrorist win when we give up our basic rights in a democratic society. And my presidency will be about reclaiming those rights and working with the world to meet the challenge of terrorism.

Mark Hertsgaard: You, in fact, have introduced a, I know you've mentioned, I think it's called the Ben Franklin True Patriot Act.

Rep. Kucinich: Oh, yes, it's called that.

Mark Hertsgaard: Tell us a little bit about that. You've said that the Patriot Act, if I'm correct, rescinds the first amendment, fourth amendment, fifth amendment, sixth and eighth amendments. Does your Ben Franklin True Patriot Act, what does it do about that?

Rep. Kucinich: It repeals all the provisions of the Patriot Act with the exception of those that provide for compensation to families of victims of 9-11. And other than that we, we basically wipe out the bill.

Mark Hertsgaard: So you go back to the statue quo, before September 11th.

Rep. Kucinich: Exactly right. But keep in mind. There are other, there are other rules that the Justice Department has promulgated that has given the government authority to, to reach into people's private lives or to handle its operations, for example, at [Guantanamo] Bay that needs, need to be looked at as well.

Mark Hertsgaard: Let's take another question from one of our viewers. This is from the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights. Rosa Garza from Arlington, VA.

Q: My name is Rosa Garza and I work for the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights on the grassroots operation. As a first generation Filipino American, I have a question concerning immigration reform. I would like to know what your stance is on having state and local police enforce federal immigration laws. The reason I'm concerned about this is because I feel that it criminalizes immigrants and excludes them from police protection which they should be guaranteed.

Rep. Kucinich: I agree with you. It's not an appropriate role for state and local police to be enforcing immigration laws. We have a larger question here, and the larger question is why has America now been less receptive to immigrants? I think we know the answer, part of it's because of fear. This administration's promoting fear. It's so important for this nation to remember where we've come from. We are, in fact, a nation of immigrants. It's important to remember the inscription on the base of the Statue of Liberty, Emil Lazarus wrote "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breath free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shores. Send these. The homeless, the tempest-tossed to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden door." That inscription is what America is about in creating a hope for people to come here from all over the world. We cannot turn our law enforcement agencies into something that repulses people from feeling that they can be full participants in this country. We cannot let America become less free because we fear those who come to this country in search of freedom.

Mark Hertsgaard: Where do you draw the balance, though, because I'm sure many Americans do fear the fact that they look at September 11th, they see that the terrorists who

struck there did come in through our borders. How do you make sure that you keep, to oversimplify, keep the bad guys out and invite the good people in?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, you know, Mark, it's going to be interesting to see what the investigation of 9-11 reveals. We don't know in fact whether or not our, our information that came from law enforcement was obtained or successfully used. And this is something, there's an assumption.

Mark Hertsgaard: What are you saying here?

Rep. Kucinich: What I'm saying is there is an assumption that the government didn't know anything about the fact that there were people trying to come into this country or planning to attack this country. That's why we need this report released. You know, and so...

Mark Hertsgaard: Which report?

Rep. Kucinich: The 9-11 report. We need to know that, because then we can, we can make a determination as to whether or not the concerns that we have are well-founded or if there's a concern we should have about the way that the information was used, if information in fact was supplied. I think that we need to certainly have proper police and intelligence work available. But we also need to make sure that we're not misdirecting our angst. If our fear is of the immigrant, then we are directing this nation into a, into a place which, which may be contrary to where, what we stand for as a nation. We cannot wall off our nation. We cannot separate ourselves from the world. We have to ever be open to people coming to this country. At the same time, you know, we have a responsibility to make sure that there's not a criminal element coming in here. And that's always been true. That's always been true. But we can't use that concern to, to dwarf the ambitions of, of freedom seeking people to come to America. Otherwise we'll lose what this nation's about. So the balance that has to be achieved has to be done with integrity and, and with veracity in order to have an authentic policy of, of immigration which is neither punitive nor lax.

Mark Hertsgaard: Do you believe President Bush has told the truth about September 11th?

Rep. Kucinich: I think that President Bush is getting all kinds of information and I think we have to, what we, what President Bush needs to do is to provide all the information for the American people. You know, it's, it's... I think it's a mistake to assert that the President knew 9-11 was going to happen and did nothing, because that's a stretch, but I think it's important for the information to be brought forward to the public, for a number of reasons.

Mark Hertsgaard: The information about?

Rep. Kucinich: About 9-11. How 9-11 happened. What were the events that led to 9-11. What's all the findings in this investigation that this task force has done.

Mark Hertsgaard: The White House has admitted that it was warned that such attacks might happen although just the other day President Bush denied that he had been told that al-Qaeda might hijack planes. So the average American who's reading the paper, how do they know?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, that's exactly the point. That's why we need an open discussion about it [in the next president.] I would bring about such an open discussion, just so American can, we can put this behind us. Because all the questions that, that loom about 9-11 in away divert us from being able to heal our nation. We had a great tragedy in our national family. The loss of lives and the families who were effected and the heart of this country was, was wounded. When you have a death in the family you, you bring the family together to talk about it. You try to see if there's any reason or rhyme to it, and then you try to find a way to have some closure. But you can only do that by getting to the truth of the matter. This isn't about blame. This is about reconnecting with the purpose of our nation, not, not for the purpose recrimination but for the purpose of continuing to unfold as to who we are and not be stuck, not be so traumatized by 9-11 that we can't get off of it and we're forced to start attacking other nations and thinking that somehow that's going to be the solution. We need to get to the deeper truths of 9-11 and as president I'll help lead this country to the kind of healing that will enable us to get to the truth, have some closure and move on to do the great things this nation is capable of in the world.

Mark Hertsgaard: Let's take another question. This from a member of the U.S. Student's Association, Steven Alvarez in Santa Cruz, CA.

Q: Hi, my name is Steven Alvarez and I'm with the undergraduate student government at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Based on the recent ruling about gay marriage in Massachusetts, I wanted to ask you would you support legislation for domestic partnership and would you include the same benefits that heterosexual spouses are guaranteed?

Rep. Kucinich: Yes. And I already support such an effort. Furthermore, as President of the United States, the matter of, of gay marriage needs to be addressed in a forthright way. I think, that the protections of civil law ought to be made to everyone regardless of race, color, creed or sexual orientation. We should not ask that, that this nation turn its back on those who, people who love each other very much but happen to be of the same sex and that they somehow should be denied the protections of over 1049 different civil laws that married couples are able to achieve. I think that this is neither a liberal nor conservative issue. Because the conservative approach would say that people who, who love each other ought to be together and ought to stay together and that adds to a stable society. I think what we need to do is be openhearted as a nation and as president, I will lead the nation in that direction. And furthermore as a candidate I'm fully prepared to challenge the President if he feels that he can use this as some kind of a wedge issue to divide the American people. I think only an American, only a Democratic candidate who is courageous and forthright in bringing this issue to the American people can touch the hearts of the American people and, and turn this in a new direction, away from polarization, away from condemnation and towards tolerance and acceptance.

Mark Hertsgaard: Let me ask you a question off of issues for a second, because certainly part of what makes Americans vote for president is where they stand on the issues, but part of it also their sense of the person. I'm always struck as a reporter, those of you who run for president, run

for public office, it is an exhausting, exhausting process, I salute all of you about that. My question is when is the last time that you had a genuine day off? I mean a day off. No work. And what did you do that day, how did you spend it?

Rep. Kucinich: Thanksgiving.

Mark Hertsgaard: Thanksgiving?

Rep. Kucinich: Yeah.

Mark Hertsgaard: And how did you spend it?

Rep. Kucinich: Thanksgiving. I spent it with friends, at Thanksgiving dinner, just you know, spent some time walking on a beach and had a great Thanksgiving dinner and it was just fantastic. I enjoyed it immensely.

Mark Hertsgaard: No campaign calls.

Rep. Kucinich: Oh, no, no, no.

Mark Hertsgaard: Nothing.

Rep. Kucinich: No.

Mark Hertsgaard: Just friends and family or...

Rep. Kucinich: Friends.

Mark Hertsgaard: And I have to ask you, how's the search for the future first lady coming?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, you have to remember the context of this, Mark. The context is I was asked a question as were all the candidates what would be the role of, of a first lady in, or first mate, in your administration? And by the time the question got around to me I said, look, I'm not married, I can only fantasize about this but I'd want a woman who is passionate about health care and working for peace and, and a full employment economy, and then I said so, if you're out there, call me. And I heard from a lot of women.

Mark Hertsgaard: The phone rang and rang.

Rep. Kucinich: Well, you know what it shows, though, it shows that American women are, want to be taken seriously about the role a first lady could have in an administration. That it's not just going to be as some kind of a prop. But that women are playing a vital role in our society and expect to be taken seriously and, you know...

Mark Hertsgaard: So how would the first lady function in a Kuchinich administration?

Rep. Kucinich: Would be a partner.

Mark Hertsgaard: Um-huh.

Rep. Kucinich: Someone who is an advisor.

Mark Hertsgaard: In a way that, for example, Hillary Clinton was during the Clinton years, that kind of a partner?

Rep. Kucinich: I think that Hillary Clinton and you know, there have been other first ladies that have I think been very close to their husbands. You can go back through most of the first ladies in one way or other have played a role in providing advice. They may not have been as high profile about it, but I think it's important for a would be president to acknowledge that whoever the first lady would be, or if we're talking about in a case of a woman candidate, the first mate, would be in a position to have some influence. You can't ignore that, I mean, we're all, the people who are closed to us have some influence in our lives and I think it's important to acknowledge that our significant other or our spouse would have some impact on what's going on in the country. It's inevitable. The question is, there are certain areas that I think women in particular have a strong interest in and we want to make sure that, that, that is acknowledge. And the young lady who actually won a contest that politics New Hampshire put up. I had a chance to say hello to her and we got together for breakfast the other day and she really, I think, her name's [Ginny Santore], and she in a sense is [emblematic] of women all over this country who, who are serious about public policy and want a president to take their interest in these issues in a serious way, and I, I do.

Mark Hertsgaard: One question about that, abortion. A number of women that I talked to preparing this broadcast were concerned about you because of your position on abortion. In the past you were pro-life, quite outspokenly so in your early career. Since then you've come around to being pro-choice. Can you explain a little bit about that.

Rep. Kucinich: Well, when you say outspokenly so, I actually [never] gave a speech on the floor of the House about it except recently in defense of a women's right to choose. I've had a journey on this issue and it's not the kind of issue that you can just [snap] flip like that. This has been a product of, of many years of discussion with women in my life and with members of Congress, women in Congress and the Supreme Court made a ruling in a Nebraska case, *Sternberg v. Carhardt*, which said that the, the legislative body in Nebraska had to take into account or failed to take into account a women's health, her, the definition of the procedure and it, that it did not meet their test of *Roe v. Wade* and that it imposed an undue burden on a woman. That was with respect to a late term abortion bill. The Congress of the United States brought that identical bill back and that was a moment for me to, to look at where the issue was going because...

Mark Hertsgaard: [That's it.]

Rep. Kucinich: That was the moment, it looked, yeah, I looked at it and I said, you know, they're not even concerned about a woman's health? I mean, you know, we, we need to, after the

Supreme Court has stated that, that this is something that you must consider, it was just like swept aside. And so when Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin offered an amendment to meet the Constitutional test, to say that it has to take into account a mother's health, that there has to be a definition of procedure and that it cannot constitute an undue burden, Congress rejected that. So, then for the first time in my career I voted present on an issue that I had consistently voted in, in favor of and that signaled a shift and then the women in the Congress and in my life started to talk to me some more and say, this is not simply a matter of privacy, which it is, it's not simply a matter of choice, which it is, it's a matter of whether a woman is going to have true equality in society. So I can sit here and say that since that moment that I have consistently supported a women's right to choose. This is before I became a candidate for president.

Mark Hertsgaard: What year?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, this happened last year, but it was long, it was long before I became a candidate for president. And that I, that I've supported a woman's right to choose, and in the last bill that came up I not only voted to, to defend a woman's right to choose, I spoke on the floor of the House, and for the first, and actually for, you know, one of the first times I've ever spoken on the issue because I felt that it's important, you know, while we, while we want to make abortions less necessary through sex education and birth control, we can only do that in the context of protecting Roe v. Wade and a woman's essential equality in society. For those who are interested in trying to make abortions less necessary will also need to support pre-natal care, post-natal care, childcare, a living wage, universal health care, and that way we can, we can help improve the quality of life in our society. And Mark, because of my journey on this, I may be the only presidential candidate who's in a position to understand people's hearts, who's in a position to try to balance what is really a, a very difficult issue for, for our American community. And to try to reconcile people to get away from the judgement and the condemnation that is so afflicted this consideration of this issue. And to try to create circumstances where abortions are less necessary but only to affirming that a woman's essential equality by protecting Roe v. Wade. And finally, as President, I will ask anyone who wants to be appointed to the Supreme Court to, to commit to protecting Roe v. Wade so that we don't go back into this very difficult national debate which could serve to undermine not only a woman's right to choose but her equality.

Mark Hertsgaard: You mentioned health care. Let's take another question from one of our viewers. This is a LinkTV viewer.

[Audio tape side A ends/Side B begins]

Q: ...and it's even more important to put that idea into effect. Are you in favor of national health insurance or a single payer plan, similar to that in Canada and if so, how would you implement such a plan in view of the hostility of the health care industry and the high probability of a Republican Congress?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, first of all, thank you for the compliment. It is laudable to be for universal, single payer. And as a matter of fact, I have such a plan. I've introduced legislature with John [Connors] of Michigan, HR 676, to create a universal, single payer health care system, a national health plan, extended Medicare for all. Now the way that we would accomplish it is

this. Currently the United States pay \$1.4 trillion for health care, that's from private resources and from the government. And all that money goes into, into paying for the health care services for this country, except for one thing. Hundreds of billions of dollars of that \$1.4 trillion go for things like corporate profits, stock options, executive salaries, advertising, lobbying, marketing, cost of paperwork in the private sector is 15-30%. We're already paying for a universal standard of health care but we're not getting it because of the allocation of dollars. My plan is to take America away from a for-profit system where health care is rationed by according to ability to pay and create a not-for-profit system where all the resources go into providing Americans with medical care for all medically necessary procedures, with dental care, vision care, mental health care, long term health care, a prescription drug benefit, alternative and complementary medicine. All that would be covered. And we have the money to do it now. The question is do we have the political will and leadership? And that's where I come in. I intend to make this the defining domestic issue in this election and by doing that I will demonstrate to the American people that if they will follow the same lead that the people in 1932 gave this country when it gave FDR a mandate for sweeping economic change by electing 88 new members of the House and 13 new members of the Senate to create the context of the New Deal, I will ask the American people give me a Congress that will give you health care. That's the way that we challenge the insurance industries who have a, a stranglehold on our political process. We can make this an issue in every congressional district. And I'm ready, I'm prepared to do that. Now there are some candidates for president, Mark, who have said, you know, if you want fundamental change in the system I'm not your man. And one of those candidates is a doctor...

Mark Hertsgaard: Howard Dean is the man you're referring to.

Rep. Kucinich: Frankly. And you know what, I think that it's time to get a second opinion and a second opinion would give the American people the understanding that you can have a not-for-profit system. Now Governor Dean has said that you know, well, he wants everyone to have health insurance, even though ten million people would be left out of his plan, he wants everyone to have health insurance. We must look at that description. Health Insurance. That means you can have health insurance but you're still going to be stuck with an insurance company that's going to raise your premiums, increase your co-pays, increase your deductibles and shrink you area of coverage because insurance companies make money not providing health care. So, my plan is to take it out of the hands of the private insurers and out of the hands of the pharmaceutical companies, and create a not-for-profit public health care system where everyone is cared for. And that's a major difference between Governor Dean and I and I think it's going to be one of those defining issues in this election.

Mark Hertsgaard: You've called it "Medicare for All."

Rep. Kucinich: Right.

Mark Hertsgaard: And you've pointed out that the United States almost alone of advanced industrial countries, we're the only country that does not have universal health care.

Rep. Kucinich: Yes.

Mark Hertsgaard: But I have to ask you, having spent time in Europe and other places, what do you say about the people who say yes, they have universal care but they wait forever to get to a doctor, they wait in long lines to get non-emergency procedures. Does that concern you at all about a public health care program?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, there's two answers to that. First of all, today many people can't get any health care at all. We have 43-45 million Americans who don't have health insurance, cause they can't afford it. This market-based approach towards health care inevitably is going to exclude more and more people, and inevitably it's creating a kind of poverty in this country where you either have the ability to pay or you don't. And if you don't have the ability to pay you're out of luck. There's a lot of people experiencing bankruptcy because they can't afford their doctor bills. Now that's a fact. This system is, is a system that is, is becoming increasingly corrupt because it's ignoring a basic concern of the American people for health care because it's held by certain financial interests. So, I'm going to break that hold. Now, the question is will you be able to provide health care for all the people under this system and will they have access to it. The answer is absolutely. We built in to the financial projections the, the, the inevitability of increased utilization.

Mark Hertsgaard: What does that mean? More and more people will use it.

Rep. Kucinich: More and more people are going to use it, absolutely. And that what does it mean is that also we have to build out our health care infrastructure. We have to create more medical education opportunities so more people will be able to go to medical school and I'm working with someone, someone who's, who's an expert in this field, we'll have to be able to have more individuals going into nursing and other medical technologies so we can create the context for people to be able to provide the support as the system grows. And we also will have an emphasis on prevention. You know, so much of our health care costs today get driven up because the emergency rooms end up being the health care of last resort when people are in serious condition they end up going to emergency rooms when the ounce of prevention would be worth a pound of cure. So the emphasis will be on preventative medicine and there will also be an emphasis on maintenance of health care where people can get taken care of and they don't get into the kind of extreme expenses that come from not having your health taken care. It will mean a healthier nation, a more productive nation, a nation which care feel a little bit more freedom [being that] it's not constrained by private health care companies. So, you know, this is really a, an all encompassing issue in this country and I intend to, as I said, make it a defining issue in, in this race for president.

Mark Hertsgaard: I want to turn to foreign affairs in a second but first one more question on the domestic side. Education is obviously another big issue. You've talked about giving, and I'm sure many parents around the country will love to hear this, free college tuition. How will you provide free college tuition to, and how many American would be available, eligible for free college tuition?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, right now, based on the fact that there are about 12 million people going to public colleges and universities in this country and figuring that perhaps the average cost of it could be between \$5000-6000 a year. You know, you extrapolate that, you have

between \$60 and 72 billion a year that would have to be set aside for tuition free education at public colleges and universities. So the question would be where, where could that money come from.

Mark Hertsgaard: \$72 billion.

Rep. Kucinich: Right. Well, anywhere from 60-72. You know, the numbers keep getting recalculated because what's happening is states are experiencing budget cuts and are now passing along the costs to the students in terms of higher tuition. If we change our budgetary practices and take some of the pressures off the states and, and you then have a little bit more play where there's some more resources. Well, we don't have that right now. So let's talk about where our government's resources are going right now. We have seen an administration that provide tax breaks to people in the top bracket, people who weren't asking for such breaks I might add. There's been a redistribution of the wealth upwards. It's not healthy for this country. I want to see the tax breaks that went to people in the top bracket canceled and put that money right into a fund for universal college education, tuition free.

Mark Hertsgaard: Could anyone then who wanted to go to college, who obviously passed the scholastic part of it, could they then be assured under a Kuchinich administration money will not be an obstacle, you will be able to go to college?

Rep. Kucinich: That's the direction we want to take the country, absolutely. Now keep in mind, this administration has created a, a budget deficient from \$276 billion surplus in the year 2000 to an over \$500 billion deficient in this coming year. We have to be aware that they've created some serious financial problems. But we can remedy some of those problems. We can remedy them by getting the United States out of Iraq. We're already into the war there for \$155 billion. The continued occupation of Iraq will cost this country dearly, not only in terms of our national reputation, and not only in terms of loss of lives of the men and women who serve this country, but it will be a drain on America's ability to be able to meet a domestic agenda for education, for health care, for housing and all of, and a whole range of social programs. So as President of United States, I would put a priority on education. There's another area here, too, that speaks to the use of our national resources. The Pentagon budget has been expanding very rapidly. I would contend that it's being driven by fear. One doesn't look too much at the spending policies inside the Pentagon, but actually that's my job. I'm the ranking member on a sub-committee that has jurisdiction over national security and we've held hearings on spending practices in the Pentagon. We know, for example, that the Pentagon has over a trillion dollars in accounts it cannot reconcile. We know about...

Mark Hertsgaard: Because they've lost a trillion dollars through bookkeeping errors.

Rep. Kucinich: Means they can't, means they can't track it down. You know, they have over a thousand accounting systems. They can't track it down and so we don't know. We also, we also, what we do know though is that for example, this missile system that they want to put up, we know that that system...

Mark Hertsgaard: The space weapons system? Yeah.

Rep. Kucinich: The missile shield.

Mark Hertsgaard: Oh.

Rep. Kucinich: We know that that system, right from the beginning, as been fraught with fraud. And that we shouldn't be spending money on it. So I'll set that system aside. I'll set aside the building of new nuclear weapon. I'll set aside the building of, putting weapons in space, creating a weapons platform in space. We have so many weapon systems right now that are being developed when we haven't even used the previous generation. There's a tremendous amount of waste that's going on. I believe a 15% reduction in the Pentagon budget can be achieved without any adverse impact on our national security whatsoever. As a matter of fact, we'll have a better enhanced national security because we won't be wasting the tax payers money.

Mark Hertsgaard: Will they find the trillion dollars then?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, you know what, we'll find a way to straighten out the books. I mean this is a nightmare for the taxpayers as well as for fiscal management.

Mark Hertsgaard: A trillion dollars.

Rep. Kucinich: That's right.

Mark Hertsgaard: That is a thousand billion, is that what that is?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, yes.

Mark Hertsgaard: As they say, that's more money [TALKING OVER EACH OTHER]

Rep. Kucinich: Well, right a billion here, a billion there, it starts to add up, that's what they say.

Mark Hertsgaard: Yeah.

Rep. Kucinich: And see, this, and I would further contend that our entire defense strategy is outmoded. That we're fighting the last wars, that we need to encompass a view of the world as interconnected and interdependent. That the challenges in the future are not nation states against nation states. The challenge of the future are these non-state actors. And the only way you meet that challenge is to organize with the world community. So, I'll have a, a strong defense but it will be lean. It's not going to be wasting the tax payers dollars. And that means that we'll have more money for a domestic agenda. So, isn't it, you know, what's interesting? It always just [___] me when people tell me well, you know we have money for education, you know, we don't have money for health care, but we have money for tax cuts for people in the top brackets, we have money for war, we have money for an expanded Pentagon budget. We have money for those things but we don't have money for the basic needs of the country. Wrong! As president, I

will direct a shift in priorities in America where we start taking care of the basic needs of our people here at home, and that's what government ought to be about. It ought to be about meeting people's practical aspirations. And we're not doing that right now because I'll tell you, people don't aspire to war. You know, this is like a riff on, on Marie Antoinette who said, you know, years ago, the French, let them eat cake. Well, now we're being told by administration, let them eat war.

Mark Hertsgaard: Well, that is a perfect introduction to our next question. Here again from our young friends at Wiretap, Eleanor [Polly] from Colorado.

Q: Hi. My name is Eleanor. I'm calling from Colorado. I'm a Wiretap reader and a member of [Peace Jam]. I'm asking this question because I would like to see peace achieved in my lifetime but I am confused by the irony of the practice around, trying to achieve peace through war. My question is, do you have any new ideas for achieving peace?

Rep. Kucinich: Yes, I do and you have a right to ask that because the future always knows when the place that's being prepared for it is threatened and the young people of America today are very aware that our government is moving in a direction which threatens their future. On July the 11th, 2001, I introduced legislation now supported by 50 members of Congress to create a cabinet level Department of Peace. That new idea will take America in a new direction, which connects us to the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, to the vision of Mahatma Gandhi and others who've worked for peace, so we can look at our own nation and the challenges we have in our own society, challenges like domestic violence, spousal abuse, child abuse, and through education, through working with community groups and non-governmental organizations, we create a whole new context in our society to address those issues that have vexed our homes and our communities, issues including gang violence, violence in the schools, racial violence, violence against, violence gays, police/community relations challenges that keep percolating. These are things we need direct programs to deal with, and we need an awareness in our society. We need it to become the work of our society in addressing this, to teach children at the earliest age peace giving, peace sharing, mutuality, reciprocity, looking at the other person as an aspect of oneself. We can actually teach this. We can become a more peaceful society through, through dedicating our society to do that. And, Mark, on an international level, the Department of Peace, will work with the other nations of the world to make war itself archaic. We must believe in our capacity to evolve. War is not inevitable unless we act on the belief that it is. If you believe war is inevitable, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. So my work as PREsident of the United States will be to work with nations of the world to create a new structure for peace so we can make the work of peace, that work in the everyday lives of nations around the world. And you know what's really interesting is that, and now a member of Parliament, John McDonald, has taken up this bill that I've introduced in the House of Representatives and has introduced it into Parliament.

Mark Hertsgaard: In Great Britain.

Rep. Kucinich: To create the discussion in Great Britain. And I'm in touch with other legislators from around the world. And I think this idea is going to start catching on. So we can create peace and I want, I want our young caller to know that you have a right to expect that.

You have a right to expect your leaders will take us away from war. War is not inevitable. And war is proving increasingly, as we go into a complex society, to be a way that is wasteful, counterproductive and we must proceed with what President Franklin Roosevelt called the science of human relations in finding a way to work together. As President Kennedy said, you know, we must learn to live together as brothers and sisters or we'll perish together as fools.

Mark Hertsgaard: Franklin Roosevelt though, of course, also fought and led American forces in World War II, and I wonder if there aren't sometimes when violence is as unwanted as it may be is necessary. I want to ask you about something quite specific here. In 1999, the War in Kosovo, Clinton administration intervened there to stop the ethnic cleansing of Albanians. And at the time you opposed the U.S. intervention and at the time you told, or at least were quoted in the Cleveland Plain Dealer as saying that people should instead pin their hopes for peace "on whatever source of humanity remains" in [Slovidon Molosovich]. He, of course, was the Yugoslav dictator, who had spent the last eight years ethnically cleansing people throughout the Balkans. So, some people might ask how can you in a situation like that, a man who has shown, Molosovich in this case, who has shown an eagerness to direct the murder of thousands of people. Isn't it necessary for the U.S. or some force to intervene to stop that evil?

Rep. Kucinich: Well, it's necessary for the world community to cooperate in a manner that can meet that kind of challenge. Absolutely. However, let's look at what happened. What happened is that the Dayton accords which were designed to create a workable framework for the settlement of all of these issues in the Balkans actually ended up being nothing more than a papering over of the differences that occurred. So that you had Molosovich, [Turkjesman and Isobegavich] walk out of Dayton without a real hard and fast agreement about the direction they would go...

Mark Hertsgaard: These are the Balkan leaders.

Rep. Kucinich: That's right. We just, what we did was basically shove this under the carpet and call it an agreement. The fact of the matter is that the violence continued to percolate and was not addressed throughout the region. What happened with the Clinton administration is that there was a meeting with, with the Serbian government at [Ramboiere] in which Secretary Albright gave them a non-negotiable demand that basically said turn over your country and that set the stage for the intransigence. Look, we, and then the bombing of Belgrade, which I opposed. Look, we can't make any mistake about the fact that there are people in the world who want to engage in a path of violence without restraint. That's why it's so important to have a strong United Nations. That's where the strength of the U.N. comes into play. You have to remember that with this action against Serbia, what happened is that the North Ame, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization took a new stance where they became an offensive organization instead of a defensive organization. We really went around the process that could have been, I believe, effective over a long period of time at the U.N. I have a strong belief that the U.N. process can work if it's funded. I met with [Koffi Anan] who told me the greatest problem that he had is he didn't have the funds to do the job. If the U.N. is funded we can work through the world community. But what we need to do, Mark, we need to be wary of an administration that wants to proceed on a [doctrine] of unilateralism and pre-emption to try to justify wars anywhere. This administration in Iraq attacked a country that did not attack us and that we, we

could have worked the U.N. procedures of weapons inspections to prove that there were no weapons of mass destruction. So it isn't as though we're fated to, to attack nations whose leaders get out of control. The idea of a Department of Peace is you're, you're on the ground early on and you're seeing where the violence is percolating. That, that what we often find is the intervention comes in long after just, you know, reams of data have appeared that indicate you've got a problem. It's like you have a small fire and you wait until it engulfs a forest. Well, the Department of Peace would be there early on in finding ways of meeting those difficulties that are occurring. And if nothing can be done, that's what the United Nations ought to be about. No nation should take it upon itself to become the enforcement mechanism for international principles. That's what the U.N.'s about. That's the only way we're going to have peace in this world.

Mark Hertsgaard: Let's take a question that relates to this from one of our viewers. This is a member of the World Affairs Council Betty Overhoff from Danville, CA.

Q: Hello. My name is Betty Overhoff and I'm Contra Costa Chair of the World Affairs Council. My question is about North Korea. Do you view them as a possible threat to the United States, and if you do, how will you handle this problem?

Rep. Kucinich: When President Bush declared North Korea part of the Axis of Evil and then he proceeded to attack Iraq without any justification he created a North Korea a problem for the United States. As President of the United States, I would meet with the North Korean leaders and assure them that we have no intention of attacking their country. I would ask them to give up any of their ambitions for any kind of nuclear power. I would ask them to understand that as president I intend to lead the way, to live by the tenets of the Non-Proliferation Treaty which called for all the nuclear nations to get rid of their weapons and for the non-nuclear nations not to develop weapons. The United States' credibility is on the line through the presidency and as president I would set aside the ambitions outlined in [the nuclear posture] review, for a nuclear first strike and the development of new nuclear weapons. I'd lead the world in an effort to abolish nuclear weapons. I'd provide comfort not only to the North Koreans on the security issues, but I'd also provide comfort on the economic issues. North Korea right now is having difficulty feeding its people. We need to make sure that they have the resources so that their people will be fed. We also need to make sure that the ambitions of North Koreans and South Koreans to reunify are not in anyway defeated because of the [re__ politic] of American foreign policy. And so, I think that we can achieve a [reproach _____] with the, with the North Koreans and I think that we can move in the direction which will lessen the kind of, of tensions which now exist.

Mark Hertsgaard: Can you talk quickly about the role of China, here, not only in relation to North Korea, but Nick Christophe said in the New York Times the other day that the rise of China is the most important fact in the world today, not just because China's economy is, is taking away jobs from, from others, but also their industrialization is creating enormous environmental difficulties. As president, what would you do about China?

Rep. Kucinich: I remember meeting with a Chinese energy minister in Buenos Aires a few years ago at the Conference of Parties, the Global Climate Change talks and was talking to him

about this new development that's going on in China and the damage to the environment and one of the things he said, he said, well, you know, you're not one to talk. We're still, our people are still riding around on bicycles. And I said, great idea. We, we need to recognize that China has been for quite a while an emerging economic power and the United States needs to be in a constant dialogue with China. We also have to look at what our trade relations are in, in effect enabling China to gain an enormous amount of strength through, you know, we have a \$130 billion trade deficit with China alone right now. And I think the, the lack of a dialogue has been created by global corporations essentially setting the tone for what the, for the exodus of jobs out of this country and for the growth of China. One of the first companies I had in my office after I got elected to the Congress was Boeing who explained to me, they were promoting, they were asking me to support most favored nation status for China and I, and in the course of the conversation it was very clear that they were ready to provide prototypes to the Chinese government so they could develop aircraft and that, you know, set the stage for, you know, I think a threat to our ability to make what is really one of the biggest products that we make in this country: airplanes. We need to be aware of what our economic needs are first in this country. I do not want to see America go out of manufacturing. I think the maintenance of steel, automotive, aerospace, shipping, textiles, and agriculture are vital to our national security. We need a cooperative relationship with China. But my administration will be about reviewing the most favored nation status. We want trade with China but you know what everyone wants access to our market as well. And we have, as Lester Theroux has written, there has to be some correspondence between what a nation sells from us and what they buy from us. So we need a more even relationship with China. And also, on the issues of peace, I think the Chinese will find that I'll be the kind of president who will give them a sigh of relief, they won't have to go into a huge arms race, having to worry about an aggressive United States intent on expansion.

Mark Hertsgaard: We're about to run out of time. Let me ask you one last question. As a reporter overseas, foreigners often tell me, you Americans, when you elect your president, you're not just electing the President of the United States. You're so powerful you're in effect electing the President of the World. How would you as president live up to that responsibility?

Rep. Kucinich: I bring, and I will bring to the presidency, an holistic world view, a view of a world as one. A world that is interconnected and interdependent. A world that is linked not only nation to nation but heart to heart. And my presidency will be one which will reach out to embrace the fullness and the diversity of the world, to let people know that America is ready to participate as a nation among nations, not a nation above nations. The highest principles and aspirations that our founders set forth for this nation are principles that we can share with the world to the extent that countries are ready to embrace them. But for those who are not, we need to find a way to have peaceful co-existence. And as the President of the United States, I will create an affirmative culture of, of international law, by supporting not only nuclear abolition but by having the United States sign the biological weapons convention, the chemical weapons convention, the small arms treaty, the land mine treaty. America will join the international criminal court. We will sign the Kyoto Climate Change treaty. We will participate in a global effort to meet the problems of AIDS. We'll work to achieve the treaty with, the [SEDAR] treaty, affirming the rights of women and children. It's through an American leader who's ready to recognize the importance of an affirmative structure of international law and cooperation, that I

think we can be about the beginning of a new era of peace in the world. And I'm ready and I'm up to that challenge.

Mark Hertsgaard: Congressman Dennis Kucinich, thank you very much for joining us.

Rep. Kucinich: Thank you.

Mark Hertsgaard: You know, during this campaign just about every candidate has said that this election is really about listening to the American people, hearing their ideas and answering their concerns. In the end, that's what should decide who ends up in the White House. That's all we have time for. I'd like to thank Representative Kucinich for joining us. I'd also like to thank the citizens groups who participated with us. You can learn more about all of these groups at our Web site, www.LinkTV.org. And you can read about this program in full transcripts online at Salon.com. I'm Mark Hertsgaard in San Francisco, for the People's Voice, thanks for joining us.

Background



What if you could sit down with each of the presidential candidates for an hour to ask them hard-hitting questions about issues that real people care about? Link TV is doing just that with its new series, THE PEOPLE'S VOICE — one hour, in-depth, interviews with presidential candidates. From Iowa farmers to environmentalists to the nation's newest voters, Link TV is putting the people back in the electoral process by linking the candidates with the nation's leading citizen activist groups and membership organizations. The first edition of THE PEOPLE'S VOICE features **Rep. Dennis Kucinich**.

An election series unlike any other on national television, THE PEOPLE'S VOICE promises to mobilize the mobilizers and activate the activists by enlisting the people most involved in making this country a better place.

Journalist **Mark Hertsgaard**, the host of THE PEOPLE'S VOICE and Link TV's political correspondent, has a national reputation for probing deeper. His hard-hitting journalism has appeared in The New Yorker, Vanity Fair, Time, The Washington Post, and many other publications around the world. He is the author of five books, including most recently "The Eagle's Shadow: Why America Fascinates and Infuriates the World" (Picador).

Partnering citizen groups are being encouraged to organize "house parties" across the country, where viewers watch and participate in the interviews. Throughout each program, banners appear on the bottom of the screen giving viewers many other ways to get involved in the electoral process, from registering to vote to volunteering for a candidate's campaign to joining one of the collaborating citizen groups.

Funding for the THE PEOPLE'S VOICE is provided by The Shei'rah Foundation and Link TV viewers.

About Link TV:

Founded in 1999, Link TV is the first U.S. network offering a global perspective on news, current events and culture, presenting viewpoints seldom covered in the U.S. media. In fact, 95% of the station's first-run documentaries on global issues have never before been shown in the U.S.

Link TV is seen nationwide via satellite broadcast on DIRECTV Channel 375 and on DISH Network channel 9410 and is accessible to more than 21 million households, one out of every five, in the U.S. Link's programming, combined with its innovative use of two-way digital link-

ups and a participatory web site, deepens audience engagement and encourages active participation. Link TV is a national non-commercial channel funded by viewer contributions and grants from major foundations. For complete program scheduling and Internet streaming, go to <http://www.linktv.org>

About Salon.com:

Founded in November 1995 by David Talbot, Salon.com (NASDAQ:SALN) is an Internet company that produces 8 original content sites as well as two online communities -- Table Talk and The WELL. The content sites, updated daily or more frequently, include News and Politics, Opinion, Technology & Business, Arts & Entertainment, Books, Sex, Life and Comics.

About Participating Citizen Activist Organizations:

The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights is the oldest and broadest-based civil rights coalition in the United States. Founded in 1950, LCCR is currently comprised of more than 180 organizations representing persons of color, women, children, labor unions, individuals with disabilities, older Americans, major religious groups, gays and lesbians, and civil liberties and human rights groups. LCCR works to effect meaningful legislation, policies, and judicial appointments, and to ensure the proper enforcement of civil rights laws to unite us as a nation true to its promise of equal justice, equal opportunity, and mutual respect.

The National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC) represents 34 grassroots farm, resource conservation, and rural advocacy groups from 32 states, and works with farmers and others to preserve and strengthen family farms.

The United States Student Association (USSA) is the country's oldest and largest national student organization, representing millions of students. Founded in 1947, USSA is the recognized voice for students on Capitol Hill, in the White House, and in the Department of Education.

USSA believes that education is a right and works on building grassroots power among students to win concrete victories that expand access to education at the federal, state, and campus levels.

WireTap is the independent information source by and for socially conscious youth that showcases investigative news articles, personal essays and opinions, artwork and activism resources that challenge stereotypes, inspire creativity, foster dialogue and give young people a voice in the media.

The World Affairs Council was founded in 1947 out of the interest generated by the founding of the United Nations in San Francisco in 1945. With over 10,000 members, they are the largest international affairs organization on the west coast. The Council hosts more than 200 events every year with leading political and business leaders, academics, journalists, and artists