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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Southfield, Michigan)

For Immediate Release

February 10, 1993

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
UPON ARRIVAL AT DETROIT

Selfridge Air National Guard Base
Detroit, Michigan

5:10 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very, very much. Thank you for coming out on this cold day to make me feel warmly welcome to Michigan. I want to say how grateful I am to be back here again. This is my first trip out of the Nation's Capital as your President -- the first time I've ever been on Air Force One, I flew here to Michigan. (Applause.)

I want to say a word of thanks to Chairman Dingell and your wonderful Congressman from this district, David Bonior, and all the members of Congress who are here; and Senator Levin and Senator Riegle. I want to thank my good friend, Governor Blanchard, who flew here with me from Washington. (Applause.) I want to thank all of you who are here, and I'd like to say a special word of thanks to the men and women in uniform who are here in this crowd who serve our nation every day. I know you're grateful to them. (Applause.)

I want to thank the people of Michigan without whom I might well not be here as President today -- (applause) -- for your support in November and your support in March. And more importantly, maybe, for all the things that I learned here in Michigan.

When I was a boy, the first thing I ever knew about Michigan, growing up in Arkansas was it was sort of the land of opportunity for our people who couldn't make a living on the farm anymore. They came here and became middle class citizens by working in the auto plants or by other industries that were successful. When I came here as a candidate for President, I didn't know whether I could do very well. And after I came home, the first time I called my wife, I said, every other person I met was from Arkansas; we're going to do all right up here. (Laughter.)

People came here because Michigan was the American Dream. When I came back to Michigan in this presidential campaign I found a different picture -- not all bad by any means, but much more mixed. I saw in Michigan people who were developing new industries and new technologies and new hope for the future. I saw people working together across racial lines. But I also saw industries dying on the vine, and people who had worked all their lives losing jobs and losing their health care. And I saw people divided by race, too.

I saw everything about America writ large here in this state. All that is best, all that is most troubling; but I saw an awful lot of hope, too. Today when I left the White House to come here, we had a crowd of folks come out on the lawn to say good-bye, and when I knew that we'd bring in some folks just from the public who were there and some people who work in the White House, many of whom had never met the President before. And I had so many people who work in correspondence who were telling me that the letters are coming in at record rates here, massive numbers of letters for me, for my wife, for my daughter. People writing us about their hopes, their dreams, their new ideas.

MORE

I'm going to do a town hall meeting tonight, a televised meeting, connecting four cities -- not just Detroit, but three others, too, and all across the country. You know, between June and November I did nine of those. But I started a year ago in New Hampshire doing them, because I believe that people like me shouldn't hide from the people who elected them. (Applause.) I think we ought to be accountable.

There will be many difficult and challenging days ahead. But if you'll stay in touch with me, if you'll let me hear the truth of your feelings and your ideas, when you agree and when you disagree, I think we can change this country. (Applause.) And if you will give courage to your elected officials and tell them that that's what you voted for, for a change, that is difficult as it may be to change, staying where we are is the most expensive course of all, we can do it.

You know, shortly after you elected me to President, I was given my first piece of good news and my first piece of bad news. The good news was that consumer confidence was up and people were feeling better and people thought we could change the economy. That American companies in a tough global environment were becoming more productive. That interest rates had come down some and people were financing their home loans.

The bad news was that no new jobs were being created in our economy, and that incomes were not going up, and that after the election it was announced that the government deficit was going to be \$50 billion higher next year and just about that high every year thereafter during my term of office. And so I had to go back to the drawing board and figure out how we were going to put the American people first, take on the special interests, invest in jobs and incomes and deal with the health care crisis, and still bring the deficit down, as I promised to do. And to do it in a way that is fair to the middle class people who've worked hard and paid the bills for 12 years. It isn't easy, I'll tell you that. But I'm doing my best.

Next week -- (applause) -- we have spent literally hours and hours and hours -- the administration people and I -- and I've met with large numbers of people in Congress, many people -- many times since I became President just three weeks ago -- doing almost nothing but focusing on this economy. And I am telling you, I am confident that if we'll make some challenging decisions now and put this country on the right path, we can lift this economy up, we can create jobs, we can deal with the health care crisis and have a bright future. But remember: Everywhere I went in this election I said, "Do not vote for me if you're going to quit on Election Day. Do not come to the inaugural and celebrate the victory unless you're going to help us make the victory good."

I need your help. I didn't see a single soul -- (applause) -- I didn't see a single soul. All those thousands of miles I traveled on those buses, stopping on the country roads and going to the big cities, I never did see a person holding up a sign saying "Everything's just fine. Leave well enough alone." (Laughter.) Not the first sign. Even the people who honestly disagreed with me on a whole range of issues never said they believed that we didn't have to have the courage to change.

And so tonight I ask you: Watch what we do closely. If you think I'm wrong, call or write and tell me. But continue to support me with your prayers and your voice and your conviction, and give the members of Congress the courage to change. That is what the election was all about. And we are going to try to make good on it. Thank you, and God bless you all. (Applause.)

END

5:18 P.M. EST

The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

February 10, 1993

BACKGROUND: EXECUTIVE ACTION TO CUT GOVERNMENT WASTE AND PERKS

FEDERAL BUREAUCRACY

- o Reagan/Bush Era: Total non-defense federal workforce has grown from 1,085,000 in 1984 to 1,188,000 at the end of 1992 -- an increase of 103,000, or nearly 10%.

The overall civilian federal workforce has grown from 2,084,000 in 1984 to 2,119,000 today.

- o Clinton Administration: Will reduce federal bureaucracy by 100,000 or more by the end of 1995.

ACROSS THE BOARD ADMINISTRATIVE CUTS

- o Reagan/Bush Era: Agencies were not required to keep track of or account for administrative costs even as the federal budget deficit ballooned to over \$300 billion in 1992.
- o Clinton Administration: Will require agencies to itemize administrative costs (travel, transportation of things, moving expenses for people, communications expenses, consulting and other contracting costs, printing, supplies and materials), and reduce those costs 14% in the next four years.
- o OMB estimates that these two measures -- reducing the bureaucracy by 100,000 and cutting administrative costs by 14% -- will save taxpayers at least \$9 billion over the next four years.

VEHICLES

- o 299 "Executive Use Vehicles" used by Executive departments and agencies during the Bush Administration.
- o 45 of these vehicles were used for home-to-work service for senior executives at the agencies and the White House

Bush White House: Chief of Staff, Deputy Chief of Staff, Chair of Council on Economic Advisors, National Security Advisor, Deputy National Security Advisor, Counselor to President for Domestic Policy, Protocol Officer

- o Within the current plan, only three White House staffers will be eligible for home-to-work transportation service: Chief of Staff, National Security Advisor and Deputy National Security Advisor. Deputies in departments and agencies will not get home-to-work service as they did during the Bush Administration.
- o With the current plan, 50% of the Executive Vehicle Fleet will be cut in FY '93

EXECUTIVE DINING ROOMS

- o Bush Administration: 10 of the 14 Cabinet agencies operated 1 or more executive dining rooms at a total operating cost of \$4 million.
- o Clinton Administration: All executive dining rooms, if they remain open, must recover costs.

GOVERNMENT AIRCRAFT

- o Bush Administration: There were numerous accounts of abuse of travel privileges by top level officials -- notably Chief of Staff, John Sununu.
- o Clinton Administration: Tightening controls on use of government aircraft.

UNNECESSARY ADVISORY COMMISSIONS

- o Reagan/Bush Era: Allowed advisory commissions to proliferate, costing taxpayers \$150 million per year.
- o Clinton Administration: Will eliminate at least one third of the 700 non-statutory federal advisory commissions.

Typical examples of advisory commissions: The Advisory Panel for Animal Learning and Behavior, The National Sea Grant Review Panel, The Weather and Climate Coordinating Committee, The Board of Tea Experts, The Advisory Panel for the Dictionary of Occupational Titles.

Source: OMB 5/92

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

February 10, 1993

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN MEETING WITH CABINET MEMBERS

The Cabinet Room

10:33 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Ladies and gentlemen, I'm going to sign these executive orders, and then I will go over to the microphone and make a statement about each one.

The first order requires by attrition or reduction in federal positions of 100,000. The second order is a reduction in the administrative costs of the present federal government by three percent per year on average leading up to five percent in the fourth year of this four-year term and abolishing several boards and commissions. The third order deals with -- excuse me -- the third order deals with the commissions.

These are memoranda to the department heads -- one deals with perks, one deals with government vehicles, one deals with aircraft.

Members of the Cabinet and staff, tonight I will be going to Michigan and the Vice President will be going to California to hold town meetings with American citizens to talk to them about the economic problems and the budget mess that we have inherited and the priorities and principles we intend to bring to our efforts to change the country and bring about a recovery.

The people demand and deserve an active government on their side. But they don't want a government that wastes money, a government that costs more and does less. They voted for change. They wanted a literal revolution in the way government operates, and, now, you and I must deliver.

Yesterday I announced the reorganization of the White House staff that will reduce our staff by 25 percent and cut costs by \$10 million per year. Today I have called you, the members of the Cabinet, together to take the next step. To begin the overhaul of government as a whole. The steps we're taking today will save the American taxpayers \$9 billion. They won't be easy but they will make a difference. We have an obligation and an opportunity to change the way government works and to show that government can do more with less.

Our government needs change. For the last dozen years I've heard our leaders call loudly for less government while giving people more government and, perhaps more importantly, while giving almost no attention to better or different government; to new ways in which partnerships could be made with people in the private sector and in state and local governments.

Too often in the last decade people have rushed to defend the power of the few at the top and privileges of the elite not just in the private sector but also in government. Too often when economic security of ordinary Americans has been threatened, government has sat still, refused to lead not even follow, just get in the way. That era has come to an end with our coming to office.

MORE

Today, the Cabinet and I are taking several steps to show that we intend to change the way that government works. But I want to make it clear this is only a beginning, not the end of the process.

First, I am ordering a reduction of the federal bureaucracy by at least 100,000 positions over the next four years. At least 10 percent of these cuts must come from senior management. The cuts must come -- can come from attrition; I see no need for layoffs. These cuts will make our government more efficient and more effective. The government is full of dedicated people whose hard work is being choked off by our own bureaucracy.

Second, I'm ordering each federal department and agency to reduce its administrative as opposed to its program costs by 12 percent over the next four years. With better planning and innovation we can make better use of the money we already have. In many agencies overhead is too high, red tape is too thick and the day-to-day operations of the agencies have not been reexamined in a very long time. I believe government can both care about people and be careful with their money.

Third, I am today ordering the elimination of hundreds of unproductive and duplicative advisory commissions that have spread across this government like kudzu. I'm asking the Office of Management and Budget to eliminate at least one third of the 700 advisory boards and commissions that were not created by Congress. From now on agencies and departments will not be allowed to create new commissions without permission from OMB. We simply cannot allow the federal bureaucracy to beget more bureaucracy.

Finally, we have to shrink the gulf between government and the average citizen. Too often success in Washington is measured not by results but by perks. Today I've issued three directives that will begin to limit perks and privileges that have driven a wedge between Washington and the public.

First, an end to wide spread use of home-to-office limousines by top officials. Second, a reduction and a reduction in the limousine fleets overall by half. Second, I'm tightening the rules for using government airplanes and ordering an inventory of the airplane fleet with an eye toward eliminating unnecessary planes. Many people believe that there are substantial savings here.

Finally, I'm ordering the elimination of such perks as below-cost executive dining rooms and free membership in private health clubs. However, I do want to say to you, as I just told the Cabinet before we came in, this administration was also elected to provide a health care plan for the American people including setting a good example. And one of the ways I want to do that is to keep people healthier. So, I will also encourage every government agency to provide health facilities in any building of any size, as long as they are provided on equal terms to all employees from the building maintenance people to the secretary of the department.

These executive orders are just a beginning but they're a good beginning. We will now move on to really try to find ways to reinvent the way government works and relates to people. How we can empower people more and entitle them less. How we can have more effective partnerships with the private sector and with state and local government. How we can find some of the dramatic productivity innovations that have characterized our finest companies over the last few years.

I'd like to now call upon a few of our Cabinet secretaries to discuss some of the things that they have been doing in their agencies beginning with the Labor Secretary, Secretary Reich.

SECRETARY REICH: Mr. President, eliminating executive perks isn't just about saving money. It's about good management-labor relations, as any good company will tell you. And once we got rid of our executive dining room and our executives actually had to eat in the cafeteria with normal employees, we saw an awful lot of interactions that had not happened before. And everybody, I think, is much to the better.

The good idea you had a couple of days ago with regard to unemployment insurance and trading, well that idea actually happened -- that came up from an employee down in the bottom of the department who had not been heard from for years. I am no longer, in fact, my predecessor was traveling I discovered by first class whenever my predecessor had to travel around the country. I'm traveling coach. Of course, I don't need the leg room. (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: It's easier for you.

SECRETARY REICH: I do want to emphasize we're just at the beginning. I've only been there three weeks and it feels like a longer period of time than that. But, again, there is in my mind an intimate relationship between opening up the doors, eliminating the perks, listening to employees and doing a better job. And we're trying.

THE PRESIDENT: Secretary O'Leary.

SECRETARY O'LEARY: Yes, Mr. President. I've taken a processes look at least my office and asked the question of everybody there what are we doing, why are we doing it, and how can we do it smarter and faster and in a way that invites people in rather than out. As a consequence, I've been able to reduce the secretaries own staff, my own staff by 40 percent. It occurs to me that within the coming year I can probably reduce it by 50 percent.

I've made my first trip just yesterday out into the country. As a consequence, I've reduced the staff required to support me when I'm out in the field by 50 percent. And I've also put out a request to my own people to reduce our fleet by 40 percent and having just heard the new goal, I think I can easily make 50 percent.

Those are just the things that I've done in my office. I think what the results will be is we'll have a faster turnaround time on everything we do. But perhaps more importantly, I've set the standard for everyone else in the Department. And we'll do an orderly examination of processes and we can bring this to the table. I feel encouraged by it and I know we can do it.

THE PRESIDENT: I also appreciate what you've done to make the building more accessible over there.

SECRETARY O'LEARY: Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Secretary Cisneros.

SECRETARY CISNEROS: Mr. President, we've acted to act on some of the perks and some of the things we can do immediately -- freeze on promotions and a freeze on all new hires; a cutting of subscriptions to newspapers and magazines, which it seemed were piling up in every reception room and all over the building. Found that there were some 30-odd newsletters that were published by the Department, either for it's own people or for external use, and we're working on consolidating those 30 into those that are official memoranda and those that are required for other kinds of communication. We've reduced the number of cellular phones and pagers and taken a number of measures of that type. Prohibited all

flying by first class, which apparently had been done before and so forth.

But the most important thing, I think, is -- will pay for it over the longer run. Taking a cue from your own themes of reinventing government, we are going to create an effort we'll call reinventing HUD. It will start with a management level goal-setting session on a weekend, a few weeks from now, to look at how we can establish measurable, attainable goals by which we can be held accountable; that we're actually performing the mission of the organization over a period of time. Then what we hope to do is share those goals with the whole Department and have a bottoms-up process with people out in the field and out in the regions and the 13,000 employees that is that organization tell us how we can streamline and reorganize far beyond the Secretary's office, throughout the country of this organization. It is very troubled, it needs to be rethought in some fundamental ways and this reinventing HUD project is a way, not only to do it, but to get some buy-in and some stake-holding from the employees throughout the structure. It is a process that will start immediately.

THE PRESIDENT: Secretary Babbitt.

SECRETARY BABBITT: Well, we've started the reinventing government process and made some interesting findings like several of the other secretaries. I have found a motor pool which looks like sort of the equivalent of an airline. I mean, way too many vehicles, carrying way too many people to way too many unnecessary destinations. We've closed the executive dining room. I was astounded to find that the cafeteria at Interior is actually very good, much better than anything I had encountered during my tenure in Arizona. (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, there goes Arizona. (Laughter.) We only lost it by a point, I thought you could put us over the top and here we go. (Laughter.)

SECRETARY BABBITT: I've taken a look at the management structure and there's way too much top management in Interior. I found, for example, that each assistant secretary had two or three deputy assistant secretaries and what we've done is decided that assistant secretaries ought to be wise enough and good enough to have one deputy assistant secretary.

Perhaps my most interesting discovery was what I would call pony perks. This is in the form of a plan to build a vastly expanded equestrian center at the Manassas National Battlefield in Virginia. It turns out that the National Park Service, which runs the place, was hotly opposed to this line-item in the appropriations budget. And it turned out that it consists of a secretarial plan to build this equestrian center for the convenience of politicians and high-ranking officials and that, in fact, is entirely unnecessary. That particular plan is dead as of today.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, thank you. One of us has had a big problem to deal with in the last few days and my impression is that he's done quite well. I'd like to ask Secretary Espy just to give a report about the crisis he's been dealing with and what his recommendation has been.

SECRETARY ESPY: Thank you, Mr. President. I thank you for allowing me to use the good graces of your office to go to the state of Washington last week. I talked to the Vice President and Les Aspin about going and appreciate the opportunity to make the trip. I spent a day out there talking to some of the families of the children who unfortunately met their death because they ate a tainted hamburger. I gave testimony at the Washington State Senate; I talked to the governor.

And we've done a lot since then. We've talked to the industry representatives, consumer representatives. Tomorrow I meet with whistle-blowers. I'll have something to say about how meat is inspected in these federally certified slaughterhouse plants. And we have a pretty good idea of a short-term and a long-term strategy that we in part recommended and will be recommended to you and to OMB.

We inspect meat like we inspected it in 1930, and we just simply have to make some changes. We know that these pathogens that we talk about cannot be detected by visual observation; we've got to move towards a science-based system and we're beginning to do that. This particularly virulent strain of this E.coli is nothing new. We've known since 1982 that people die from eating this stuff. And I'm just really surprised that we haven't done more since 1982 to move toward a more science-based system. So we've done a couple of things. We've recommended the hiring of more meat inspectors and I'm thankful that you have included as such in your strategy for the economy. I really appreciate it and we really need it because we need to assure the public that what can be seen will be seen.

Secondly, we should talk to the industry about keeping better records. The great part of this is that we were able to contain this meat and detain it because this particular slaughterhouse kept very good records. So, we realized the points at which we could retrieve and we've done that.

Handling labels and care labels because if you cook this meat at 155 degrees, that eliminates most of the problem. And so we need to do that. Then we talked about organic acid washes at the slaughterhouse level just to remove the pathogens on the carcass and the other long-term strategies.

I met yesterday, Mr. President, with a gentleman from the University of Georgia who last year submitted a research proposal to USDA to develop a E.coli culture test that will allow us to aculturate this within less than 24 hours. And this petition was denied by USDA. So, we've asked him to resubmit it. So, we've got a long-term strategy and a short-term strategy and I appreciate the opportunity to let you know.

THE PRESIDENT: Anybody else like to be heard.

Q Mr. President, changing the subject, since Secretary Christopher is going to talk about Bosnia this afternoon, could you at least tell us are U.S. troops a part of the initiative that will be unveiled this afternoon?

THE PRESIDENT: I think I should let Secretary Christopher give his speech first. We have all worked very hard on this Bosnia policy ever since we took office and even before trying to find a way to do more but do it with the support of our allies and through the United Nations. I think I'll let him give his speech and then I'll be glad to answer questions about the policies after he does.

Q Do you think the public --

THE PRESIDENT: I think the public will support the policy that he will outline today, yes. I think they will want us to do more and want us to do it in a prudent way. And I think that that they will support this policy.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

10:52 A.M. EST

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

February 10, 1993

PRESS BRIEFING
BY DEE MYERS

The Briefing Room

9:43 A.M. EST

MS. MYERS: Good Morning. A couple of just brief scheduling updates. The President met this morning with some of his economic advisers. At 10:00 a.m. he'll begin a Cabinet meeting. The pool will go in at 10:30 a.m. for the announcement on further administrative cuts. Then he'll have a few more meetings, staff level meetings this afternoon, and he'll board Marine One at 2:45 p.m. for the trip to Detroit.

Jeff Eller is here and in a few minutes he will answer any questions you might have about the Town Hall.

Q What kind of troops to Bosnia?

MS. MYERS: Secretary Christopher will have an announcement this afternoon at 3:30 p.m. to detail the administration's policy towards Bosnia.

Q At 3:30 p.m. this afternoon?

MS. MYERS: At 3:30 p.m. this afternoon at the State Department.

Q At a news conference?

MS. MYERS: I believe it is a news conference. I refer you to them for further details but he will make announcements of the policy today.

Q Is the President going to comment on it when he arrives in Detroit?

MS. MYERS: There are no formal plans to comment on it.

Q Will there be an opportunity to ask him about it?

MS. MYERS: Again, there's no formal opportunity. I don't know whether he'll answer a question about it or not.

Q When did the plan gel?

MS. MYERS: It's something they've been working on, as you know, for quite some time. They met most recently on it on Friday and they've continued to have ongoing conversations over the course of the last couple of days.

Q Will this involve the commitment of U.S. troops?

MS. MYERS: There are no plans to send troops to Bosnia right now. That decision has not been made but the administration is looking forward to building on the Vance-Owen process.

MORE

Q Well, would troops be offered in terms of a peacekeeping force once an agreement or truce or some kind of peace agreement were in place?

MS. MYERS: Again, Secretary Christopher will have more details on that. I think, again, the administration will announce -- Secretary Christopher will talk about plans to build on the Vance-Owen process. That would include helping to enforce an agreement that might be reached by the parties but as of right now there are no specific plans to deploy troops. Secretary Christopher will have all the details this afternoon.

Q So that means the decision, a real policy decision has been made and will be announced this afternoon?

MS. MYERS: Secretary Christopher will outline the details of U.S. policy toward Bosnia, yes.

Q Why is the President not making this announcement?

MS. MYERS: Well, the President, as you know, will be on his way to Detroit but Secretary Christopher is the person who is designated to handle this, and he'll be making the announcement.

Q Why was he designated? I mean this is a change in U.S. policy --

MS. MYERS: He is the Secretary of State.

Q If the President is going to announce economic policy next week himself, why not foreign policy? Are you trying to keep the focus as far as the President is concerned on the domestic issues and not let him get tangled up in foreign affairs?

MS. MYERS: Well, I think the President can focus on both domestic and foreign issues. As you know he's been spending a great deal of time in the last two weeks working on his economic plan. He's also spent a great deal of time working on foreign policy issues and, in particular, on this Bosnia policy. It's something that he's been intimately involved in; he's worked with a variety of advisors including Secretary Christopher and others. And Secretary Christopher will make the specific announcement this afternoon.

Q Has he alerted the Allies and the U.N. about this policy in advance?

MS. MYERS: He will be.

Q The President will be this morning?

MS. MYERS: Correct.

Q Is it the President's intention that the United States take the international lead on Bosnia rather than doing this more low-key through the Vance-Owen process?

MS. MYERS: He's always asserted that the U.S. should play a role, a key role in it. And, again, I will let Secretary Christopher announce the details.

Q Dee Dee, did you say that the President will be alerting allies? I didn't hear the question.

MS. MYERS: Yes.

Q Personally? Is he going to get on the phone and call these people?

MS. MYERS: Combination. I think he'll speak to some.

Q If he's doing it that way though, if he's alerting them now, that suggests that he hasn't been consulting with them in formulating the policy. Is that a correct assumption?

MS. MYERS: As you know, he talked with Prime Minister Mulroney about it. He talked with President Ozal about it. I don't know what other leaders he may have spoken to but this is U.S. policy and it's something that has been worked out with the President and his advisors.

Q Is this the plan that Mr. Aspin took to Germany with him last weekend to discuss with the Europeans?

MS. MYERS: Secretary Aspin, of course, has been involved in this. He's been a key player in the development of this policy. I don't know specifically what details he discussed in Germany over the weekend but he's certainly been one of the primary participants.

Q Can you confirm, Dee Dee, that the President has actually been looking at a plan that would possibly include the use of U.S. troops?

MS. MYERS: Well, there have been no specific commitments made. I think they've looked at a number of things but there have been no decisions made to deploy troops at this point. But they've looked at a number of things.

Q Is that actively under consideration?

MS. MYERS: Again, I will refer you to Secretary Christopher but the administration will build on the Vance-Owen process and enforce whatever decision might be -- would be willing to look at enforcing whatever agreement might be reached.

Q But he also wants to change that agreement doesn't he? We're not very happy with the agreement are we and isn't he thinking in terms of revising it?

MS. MYERS: Absolutely. This is a process, again, to build on the Vance-Owen process to try to reach an agreement among the parties.

Q Dee Dee, how do you build on an agreement that you've rejected?

MS. MYERS: There are some elements of it that -- again, I'm going to let Secretary Christopher talk about the details of this.

Q Following up on Mark's question earlier. Is the U.S. going to be actively involved now in something like the Vance-Owen process in terms of negotiations in reaching some kind of peace settlement?

MS. MYERS: That's the goal to reach an agreement that the parties will all accept. But, again, I'm going to let Secretary Christopher talk about the specific details of this.

Q A special envoy to be involved?

MS. MYERS: The Secretary will have more to say at 3:30 p.m. at the State Department. What's it going to be?

Q Has the President talked to General Powell about his future?

MS. MYERS: He has not talked to him today. He talks to him regularly. And General Powell firmly rejected the notion that he was looking to resign early today.

Q And has he told the President that?

MS. MYERS: I don't believe they have spoken this morning, no. But he's always indicated -- and the President has nothing but the highest regard for General Powell and would like very much for him to stay, and I believe that's the General's intention.

Q Dee Dee, on the economic plan. Earlier we were told that the ballpark figure for the size of the stimulus plan was \$30 billion. Is that still the ballpark figure?

MS. MYERS: Yes.

Q No change in that?

MS. MYERS: It's still in the ballpark. Again, the specific -- the final decisions are being made but that's in the ballpark.

Q Update us on the attorney general search? Where is that process now?

MS. MYERS: The President is continuing to work on it and we'll have a decision soon.

Q Can you tell us is he still entertaining new names or is he like working off a list of folks and wading through them or how is that working?

MS. MYERS: He's considering a variety of people at this point. As you know, he's talked to a number of individuals. I can't say who and I think -- or whether they are new to the list or not but hopefully he'll have a decision soon.

Q By that do you mean this week?

MS. MYERS: I don't know. There's no specific timetable on it.

Q Can you just give us any more details on Mrs. Clinton's trip tomorrow to Pennsylvania?

MS. MYERS: I don't have all the specific details. I know she's going to a suburb of Philadelphia and then to Harrisburg where she'll have a meeting and sort of listen to testimony about various health care issues. The point of the trip is health care and she'll be with Senator Wofford.

Q Is this sort of like what she did with education in Arkansas? Is that the thought here?

MS. MYERS: It's similar, I mean, this is part of an ongoing fact-finding mission. And I would refer you to Lisa Caputo for the specific details of the trip.

Q Will she be going around to a lot of places like this? Is this the first of many stops?

MS. MYERS: I think you can expect to see her out there talking to the American people and trying to understand what their problems are and what they see as the obstacles to a better health care system.

Q Has Senator Wofford done anything in regard to health care besides get elected on the issue? Seriously, why is she going up there to fly around Pennsylvania with Senator Wofford when apparently the rap on the Hill is now that he's in office he really hasn't done much to advance the issue?

MS. MYERS: Well, I think he has been working on it. I think it's been an issue that's been gridlocked in Congress for quite some time and this administration is committed to breaking that gridlock. Senator Wofford is committed to a health care policy that both contains cost and expands access and Mrs. Clinton will be working with him on that over the course of the next several months. I think he's committed to working with this administration to find some real solutions to the health care problem.

Q Are caps on Medicare or Medicaid programs something that you would consider in the near term? It not only is part of the health reform package but to get a control of budget spending?

MS. MYERS: I think it's way too early to say. I mean, we just won't have any answers to those kinds of questions for quite some time.

Q What do you see on the weekend -- holiday weekend?

MS. MYERS: On Sunday, the President I know will be running with the American Heart Association and beyond that I don't have any details of his weekend schedule. I don't believe he's planning to go to Camp David.

Q Does he like Camp David?

MS. MYERS: He does but I just think he feels like he has a lot of work to do right now particularly with the announcement of the economic plan coming on Wednesday. So, I think he'll spend the weekend in Washington.

Q And President's Day also, the holiday?

MS. MYERS: No specific details of his schedule at this point.

Q Will that be a workday for the White House?

MS. MYERS: I think we all plan to be here. And I have a feeling you guys will be here, too.

Q Is there possible Saturday travel besides jog contingencies?

MS. MYERS: No, nothing on the plan right now.

Q Dee Dee, can you tell us how large has the Health Care Task Force war room grown to and was it at all affected by the staff cuts yesterday that deal with task forces?

MS. MYERS: The health care -- there are a number of people working on the health care plan. I would refer you to Bob Boorstin for the specific details of how that's working. There are not -- there are consultants to HHS, there are none that I know of to the White House at this point on the health care issue. But there are a number of people from the different domestic policy groups that will be contributing to the development of the health care plan.

Q Do you know how big the number of people who are actually over there working on this?

MS. MYERS: No, and again, a lot of them are working that are actually part of other domestic policy groups that will be working on health care as part of their domestic policy responsibilities that aren't specifically or completely detailed to work on health care issues. I think it will be something that -- a working group that uses people from throughout the White House staff.

Q Do you know whether or not Mrs. Clinton reviewed the Nussbaum letter to Clinger before he released it to us?

MS. MYERS: I believe she did.

Q Do you think that's a conflict of interest at all?

MS. MYERS: No, I think --

Q -- dealt with whether or not she's obeying this federal law?

MS. MYERS: I think she's certainly entitled to be familiar with whatever judgments the Counsel's office renders. I think that would be imprudent of her and unwise of her not to know what her -- what the White House Counsel had decided vis-a-vis her responsibility on the Health Care Task Force.

Q Well, if she wants to go to Pennsylvania tomorrow and hear what's on the people's mind, why not open her Task Force meetings to the public?

MS. MYERS: Everything tomorrow is open.

Q Yes, I understand but why not open the Task Force meetings to the public so that they can see what she's doing and let them know if it meets with their approval?

MS. MYERS: There have been no formal Task Force meetings at this point, and none is scheduled. However, I think there is a good chance that many elements of this process will be open to the public. I think tomorrow is a good example. This is something that she wants the American people to participate in, she's very interested in their views, as are the other members of the Task Force. And I think there will be an ongoing public dialogue about health care issue between now and certainly the development of legislation within the next 100 days, or 95 days.

Q Dee Dee, the Presidents remarks when he arrives in Detroit, is there going to be anything major at all?

MS. MYERS: No, I think it will be general. Okay. I'll let Jeff come up and answer any questions you guys might have about the Town Hall.

Q How big an audience do you expect the President to have from this meeting?

MR. ELLER: In the individual sites or by television?

Q Across the board, sort of rough --

MR. ELLER: That's a hard figure to pin down. There are a number of television stations that have called and told us they're going to clear the show other than the ones who are participating. I would say it will be a fairly significant audience.

Q Do you know how many stations it is, offhand?

MR. ELLER: Right now we're looking at about 17, including the ones who are participating.

Q Could you give us some examples?

MR. ELLER: I'll go through the list here. WLAJ in Lansing; WPTV, West Palm Beach; KMBC, Kansas City; WJRT, Flint; WOOD, Grand Rapids; KCRG, Cedar Rapids; WFTV, Orlando; KGTV, San Diego; KPIX, San Francisco; WINK, Fort Myers; WTOL, Toledo; KEVT, Santa Barbara; the six Maryland public television stations; and, I heard this morning there was a tentative on PBS in Chicago.

It is available on satellite. There's two birds it's up on. The Ku bird is SBS-6, 18V, audio 5.76; the C-Band bird is Telstar 302, 9 vertical, 6.2/6.8 on the audio.

Q And those birds are being paid for by XYZ, not by the White House?

MR. ELLER: None of the cost associated with the Town Hall meeting are being paid for by the White House including the satellite time. All of that's being paid by the participating stations.

Q Telstar was 9302 you say?

MR. ELLER: Telstar 302, 9V.

Q How many do you contemplate, town meetings say until spring?

MR. ELLER: There's no set schedule on the number of town hall meetings that we may do. The President said during the campaign that he wanted to continue doing it. I think we'll see a number of town hall meetings in the next year.

Q Jeff, is this technically something you could do from right here just as easily?

MR. ELLER: Yes, we could probably do it from here if we had to.

Q Why not do it from here?

MR. ELLER: The President expressed a desire to go the Midwest, talk to people and hear from people about their concerns about jobs and the economy.

Q Couldn't he just as easily talk to them -- they there and he here?

MR. ELLER: We could but it's always a better alternative if you can actually go out and stand in front of an audience in their hometowns and interact with them that way.

Q He's made three trips now since he was elected, all to the Midwest, to Chicago, the trip last week and --

MR. ELLER: Atlanta, that's the South. (Laughter.)

Q Is he going to other regions beyond the Midwest in the near future like right after the economic --

MR. ELLER: There's no schedule yet for post-the 17th.

Q Jeff, a year ago almost to this day the President, then the Governor, bought time on WMUR in Manchester to do a town meeting -- actually it may have been Dover -- is what we're doing tonight the lineal descendant of that creature? If not, how -- philosophically or technically.

MR. ELLER: Technically there's not a lot of difference in what we started in New Hampshire; the process is still the same. This is a President who likes to do town hall meetings, who likes to listen to people and likes to be able to update them on the progress of what he's doing. He did that as a campaign, he wants to do that as a president. The technical side of it -- six of one, half dozen of the other -- I'm not sure it's a lineal descent.

Q Can you explain it to somebody who has trouble programming his VCR, what it is you do here technically?

MR. ELLER: Well, the stations actually do the work on this. There is a studio audience in Atlanta, Seattle, Miami. They pick the audiences; the White House has no involvement in the audience. They each one of them will put their individual segments up on a satellite signal. It will all be -- it will all come into Channel 7 in Detroit, be mixed there and goes back out.

Q So there's no great technical expertise on your part required for this?

MR. ELLER: No, not really.

Q I've got kind of a two-part question. What is it that he is going to update the people on as you just said since we're told he's not going to talk at all about -- in any detail about his economic program. If he doesn't want to reveal anything what's he going to be telling them?

MR. ELLER: The thought process that's going into how he's going to arrive at the plan; how he views where we need to go. He will probably talk about the continuing problem with the deficit. It's an opportunity just to go explain to the American people where he is in the process and make them feel part of the process and make them feel connected.

Q To follow up to that -- the trip and event is being portrayed in some places, including in the paper this morning in The Times, as an effort to go around the national press corps because you do not feel your message gets out effectively. How would you respond to that?

MR. ELLER: Bill Clinton was doing town hall meetings before they were a glimmer in anyone else's eye in New Hampshire in January and February of 1991. It's something he's been doing for a long time; it's something he will continue to do. This is a President who wants to go talk to people and wants to hear from people. He's said that on any number of occasions. It is -- I would not call it an attempt to by-pass anyone, but it is an opportunity for him to look people directly in the eye, see what they are thinking and then respond.

Q This sort of has the aroma of the economic conference in Little Rock, in that it appears doubtful that anything he hears tonight from any of these citizens is going to change in any way the economic policy he's got on track now. And that he's simply gathering ammunition to fire at Congress when he presents his plan. Would that be an accurate description of what's going on here tonight?

MR. ELLER: Oh, I don't think so.

Q Do you actually think he'll hear something tonight that will cause him to rush back to the White House and change this economic policy that he's proceeding on?

MR. ELLER: He has always sought input from people throughout the country. That was a big part of the campaign; it's also going to be a big part of the presidency. I think by going at that assumption you're assuming that what the American people say doesn't matter?

Q No.

MR. ELLER: And I just disagree.

Q I'm just asking the question, do you think that he's going to hear anything new tonight that's going to change anything in the policy or that he's just using this to bolster the plan that he already has pretty much prepared to present on February 17th?

MR. ELLER: I think there's a possibility with -- we don't know whose in this audience. We don't know who these people are. We don't know what questions they're going to ask and I think there's a possibility that it could have an impact on what he does. It is very much part of the process.

Q Isn't it kind of late in the game to be seeking input? I mean, at what point do final decisions have to be made and the thing is only a week away now. Doesn't it have to be prepared, written, sent to the printers?

Q Are there any real major decisions left to be decided?

MR. ELLER: Oh, you can print overnight.

Q No, it's a serious question. Isn't it about the time that the major decisions should have been made by now?

MR. ELLER: He does not believe that you ever can listen enough. That is a big part of the process.

Q But he doesn't reasonably expect to make any changes in the policy that he is going to announce next week based on what he hears tonight?

MR. ELLER: I don't know that you can assume that. Without knowing what the questions are in advance, which we don't, then there is a very real possibility. There were times on the campaign when we did these town hall meetings and he would pull ideas from people and he really does want to hear what they say. And they do have an impact on his decision-making process.

Q Jeff, did you find a stool?

MR. ELLER: There will be a stool there.

Q What's the problem, the length of the guys legs? Or is it something else?

MR. ELLER: There really isn't a problem. It's a very friendly conversation we had on the seat the President will sit in.

Q Will it be a --

MR. ELLER: I'm working on the assumption that it's going to be a pretty plain wooden stool.

Q How will you, stools aside as it were, how would you -- I mean, how are you going to know whether you succeeded or not? What will you see -- how will you measure your success, based on what you see now?

MR. ELLER: I think the fact that we're doing it. That this is a President who is willing to go talk directly to the people and reestablish that connection between government and the people. I mean, I think that's a big thing just by the fact that we're actually going to show up.

Q If he doesn't speak in tongues or something like that?

MR. ELLER: I think it will be a success.

Q Do you know -- I know you're not involved in this, but do you know if the stations are in any way pre-screening questioners, as was done sometimes during some of these events during the campaign.

MR. ELLER: Yes. All four of these stations have a different process for selecting the audience. I can tell you sort of in general terms what they've told me on how they've selected the audience. Seattle did postcards then called people back, come up with about 20 to 25 out of a pool of 80.

Q On those postcards, did they put questions on those postcards?

MR. ELLER: I don't know. Detroit opened a comment line for people to ask to be in the town hall meeting. Then I know they went back and called them. What they've all four generally told me is they have looked for a demographic and regional balance and that they looked for an issue balance.

Q How many questions do you expect in the hour, Jeff?

MR. ELLER: It really will depend on the length of his answers and the length of -- we've asked them when they talk to people beforehand just to keep the questions short. And we'll try to keep the President's answers short as well and on point. I don't know. We averaged anywhere from 25 to 50 questions per town hall meeting in the nine we did since June, but there's no real way to tell.

Q Once these audiences are picked, which they've been picked, somebody will have to go out and pick the people within the audiences to ask the questions.

MR. ELLER: Yes, that's up to the anchors/moderators.

Q No input at all from the White House?

MR. ELLER: No, absolutely not.

Q What do you mean by an issue balance on this thing?

MR. ELLER: No, what they told me was that the issue balance they wanted -- they were looking for people who had concerns about health care and jobs and -- in Miami, for example, it's reasonable to assume there will be some concern about Haiti.

Q Did the White House send out a signal that you wanted the questions to be pretty much limited to the economy?

MR. ELLER: We said the President wanted to focus on jobs and the economy, that's how we wanted the town hall meeting to -- the focus to be on. But we also know that people being people they're going to ask what's on their mind.

Q Why did you feel the need to do that? I mean, if this is an attempt to hear what's on people's minds why are you

telling them what they should tell you, what should be on their minds?

MR. ELLER: We didn't tell people what to ask us. We suggested to the stations that the President would like to talk on jobs and the economy. But we certainly did not in anyway try to go put questions in peoples minds.

Q You don't think that might have influenced the stations in choosing who might ask questions and what their questions might be?

MR. ELLER: I think it's reasonable to assume there will be people asking about the Jack in the Box controversy in Seattle; in Haiti and Cuba in Miami; trade and the auto industry in Detroit; any number of questions could come from Atlanta. There is no guarantee there will be questions on -- there will be questions on all issues. I feel pretty comfortable in saying that.

Q Jeff, you said the President wants to get out and talk to real people. Well, we're real people, too, after a fashion anyway. What is it about -- presumably if we were doing our job to your satisfaction you wouldn't have any need to contrive these events.

MR. ELLER: That's not true and it's not a contrived event. The President, again, we were doing town hall meetings going back to New Hampshire. And in fact, this campaign was almost like a giant town hall meeting in terms of the way he touched people.

Q What is it about the way we are doing our job that isn't satisfactory in your view?

MR. ELLER: I didn't say that it was satisfactory.

Q So, it is unsatisfactory.

MR. ELLER: Or unsatisfactory. I mean, that's -- to me they are two very separate issues.

Q When's he going to do a news conference?

MR. ELLER: You'll have to talk to Dee Dee about that.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

10:00 A.M. EST

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

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February 10, 1993

PRESS BRIEFING
BY GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS

The Briefing Room

12:48 P.M. EST

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I know you are all anxious to get to Detroit so why don't we just start with questions.

Q George, we have a report that Mr. Clinton has sent a message to the Danish government asking to meet with EC heads of state at their summit meeting in Copenhagen, June 21-22, can you confirm that?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I can't confirm it -- it's something about an EC summit meeting on June 21st and 22nd.

Q That Mr. Clinton has sent a message to the Danish government asking to meet with EC heads of state.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I can't confirm that at this time, no.

Q Could you clarify the Colin Powell story. Just what is happening or what is not happening? Is he leaving early or is he not?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, I think that nobody can answer that better than General Powell himself and he did this morning. He's had a very good relationship with the President throughout the President's term so far. They've had good conversations. The President fully supports General Powell and they've worked well together. I think General Powell himself said that the story in The Washington Post this morning was generally not reflective of what he thinks. That he might want to leave early maybe to resettle his family or to take the summer off but that it has nothing at all to do with congressional testimony and there is no problem at all between the General and the President.

Q There may be a discrepancy between the figures the President was using this morning on the number of federal employees and those that are available from the Office of Personnel Management. The Office of Personnel Management says all civilian employees and counting military employees who are civilian is \$3.4 million and change. It seems to me the White House is using figures that --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I think that we're using the civilian that doesn't include military. That would be my guess.

Q Apparently if you add in the -- I mean, there's no way it seems to me that you can get from 1.188 or wherever you are to 3.4 by adding in the military. It seems like there is --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: The total civilian federal workforce, the numbers we have, went from 2,084,000 in 1984 to 2,119,000 today.

MORE

Q Do you include the Postal Service in that?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I'm not sure.

Q That might be the difference.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: It could be.

Q You're not sure if you include the Postal Service?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Andrea.

Q Could you clarify the amount of the cuts? Is it 3 percent a year but 5 percent in the last year?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Yes. The President himself changed it this morning. He thought that we should go for more than we had originally gone. And frankly, he pencilled it in to the executive order. So, now it's 3, 3, 3, 5.

Q Will each agency meet that goal or is that a government-wide goal?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Yes, for each agency.

Q So, it's 14 percent?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Yes.

Q A total of 14 percent?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I'll be frank with you. We had planned going into this morning that it was going to be 11 but the President thought that wasn't enough and he scratched it out on the executive order and made it 14.

Q And what's the overall purpose? This is not -- it's money but it's not a huge amount of money. What is the larger purpose?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, \$9 billion is not pocket change. It's an awful lot of money over four years. And I think that most Americans believe that \$9 billion in savings achieved prudently is the right way to go. And that's exactly the kind of commitment that the President is trying to demonstrate here.

He's cut the White House staff, he's cutting government perks, he's cutting every government agency. The American people have to be convinced that the President is going to do his best to cut the waste out of government. And that's exactly what he's doing.

Q Does he think it will be easier to persuade people to pay higher taxes, if that becomes necessary, by having done this first?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: The President thinks it's essential to show the American people that he's not going to waste their money, that he's not going to spend it unwisely, that he's going to cut every bit of fat out of the government, cut every perk out of the government that he can before he goes to the country with his economic package.

Q On the \$9 billion reduction, the way the federal budget is structured there isn't a separate line item for administrative costs, as opposed to programming costs. How did you go about calculating how much of the overall cost is administrative overhead, subject to this reduction?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I think you'll have to go to the OMB for the details on that. I just know that they've calculated that we can get \$9 billion in savings over the four years.

Q And another question on the announcements that the President made this morning. Do you have a list at this point about who is going to be allowed to use cars, who won't be allowed to use cars, I mean, in the agencies as opposed to White House --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I think the agencies will be working -- they're going to work it out themselves.

Q And similarly, with the advisory commissions, the OMB will --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: It's up to the agencies to work out which commissions will be cut, but each will be expected to reach the 33 percent reduction.

Q Why is it important, George, for the Cabinet secretary themselves to keep their limos?

Q To keep their limos.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I think all of the Cabinet secretary have some security concern, number one, but also they have very busy schedules and it's the most appropriate way for them to do their jobs. But they will be limiting the use throughout their agencies.

Q George, will we see additional cuts in the budget itself, or are we to assume that these 25 percent of the White House and the 3 percent a year in the agencies is pretty much the basic, across-the-board cut that we'll see?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Oh, not at all. That's just the beginning of the spending cuts that the President is looking for as he prepares his economic package.

Q So, if he has additional cuts in agencies, how will that relate to the figures that came out today?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: This will be separate but they will be expected to receive 3 percent administrative cuts -- if there are specific program cuts, they will be expected to meet those.

Q On top of those?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I believe so, yes.

Q -- clarification on that \$9 billion, did you just say that was an OPM figure?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: OMB, I believe, yes.

Q But didn't you have that number in your putting people first?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I'm not sure which number we had for the exact savings.

Q Where did that generate from?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I'll have to get back to you. I believe it's from OMB, though.

Q Since the President has talked about the sacrifice being universal, and he is setting an example, ostensibly, by making

these cuts in his own administration at the White House, what is the sacrifice that the middle class is going to have to make?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, the President is going to announce his plan next Thursday, and I don't think that I'm going to divulge any details of his plan -- I'm sorry, next Wednesday, you're right -- before he goes.

Q Are we traveling then? Is he then going to sell it to the nation?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Excuse me?

Q Is he trying to sell it to the nation?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, the President is, as you know, he is going to Detroit tonight, and we hooked up across the country, and I'm certain that he will be going out across the country at various times. We have no set plans yet.

Q Next week after his speech?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: It's not set yet.

Q Is he doing local affiliate interviews tonight, after, or any time during this trip?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Not that I know of. I would have to check with Jeff Eller. I don't think he is.

Q Do you have a policy of not putting these on the schedule, because I know -- he apparently did one after the inauguration that I just sort of stumbled across yesterday, that I haven't even been aware of his --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Not at all. I believe that we did some last Friday and they were on the schedule.

Q They were?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Yes, I believe so.

Q This was right after the inauguration he had done those.

Q He did these stations last Friday, did he not? There used to be a practice of putting out a transcript of those interviews after they had aired. Could you consider --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Oh, I certainly could, because I don't see any reason why we wouldn't do that.

Q George, you seemed to be indicating this morning that the announcement on Bosnia would be tomorrow, perhaps, and now we find out it's this afternoon.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, I said all along it would be sometime this week, and Secretary Christopher wanted to make the announcement today.

Q How much of that is President Clinton's idea and how much is being generated by his advisors and then giving it to him?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I'm not sure I know how to answer that question, but Secretary Christopher is in constant consultation with the President and with the National Security Advisor, and we all believe that it's best to go forward today.

Q George, are there other elements of this campaign to sell the economic package between now and next Wednesday, and what exactly is going to be happening on that?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I know the President will have several meetings with members of Congress. Starting tomorrow he'll be calling members of Congress to come in to the White House and discuss the parameters of the package, the principles behind the President's package. He'll be giving his regular Saturday radio address this weekend. And I assume that he'll also have other meetings on Capitol Hill or in the White House with other members of Congress starting early next week.

Q What's Wednesday's schedule, George? The plan for Wednesday is what, exactly?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I don't have the plan for Wednesday yet, we'll have it soon.

Q George, along the same line, will the President be making any trips after the address to try and sell this to the public? Do you anticipate any trips?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I wouldn't want to rule it out. We just don't have any set plans yet.

Q Has the President met with Janet Reno for attorney general, the prosecutor from Miami?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I'm not sure.

Q Has he interviewed her personally; do you know?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I believe he may have had a meeting, but I'm not sure.

Q How long did it last?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I don't know.

Q Did the First Lady have a meeting with Janet Reno last night?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I don't know. Not that I know of.

Q Can you check on that?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I can check, sure.

Q The President is having an electronic town hall meeting tonight before he's had a news conference since his inauguration, and I wonder --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: That's not true.

Q Yes, it is.

Q Had a full scale news conference.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, I mean, now we're getting into definitions. The President has taken questions from the press every single day, or nearly every single day. He had a news conference last Friday when Prime Minister Mulroney was here.

Q He's answered questions from the press but he hasn't yet had a full-scale news conference as President. I wonder if you think the ability to have electronic town hall meetings and

things of that sort make traditional presidential news conferences sort of outmoded and unnecessary?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: No, not at all. And I expect the President will give one. I dispute your contention that the President hasn't had a press conference. When you go before the press, when you make a statement, and when you answer questions for 20 to 25 minutes that is a press conference.

Q Twenty to 25 minutes?

Q Has he done a 20 to 25 minutes?

Q When did he do 20 to 25 minutes?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: With Mulroney. Prime Minister Mulroney.

MR LEAVY: And gays in the military.

Q And gays in the military.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: That's exactly right. Thank you, David.

Q Four questions on gays in the military and with Mulroney, barring translation, it was probably four or five questions.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: It was probably closer -- between seven and 10 questions. But this is exactly the point. The President has taken questions from the press, he will continue to take questions from the press. He will continue to have press conferences as he has already has done as President. I simply don't accept the contention.

Q Is he going to have what we think of as a full scale news conference? (Laughter.)

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I guess a news conference is in the eye of the beholder but I expect that he'll --

Q A news conference would traditionally be an affair -- an event that lasts a half an hour and is open to questions on all topics and that's not something that we've had.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: The event with Prime Minister Mulroney lasted about a half an hour, but just to -- just to answer your question, yes, he will be having news conferences. He will continue to have more news conferences, he will answer your questions and he will also answer the questions of the American people.

Q George, technically can you help us on describing his speech on Wednesday. Is it a state of the union or do you give it another definition?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I think it's an address to a joint session of Congress, technically.

Q But it is not -- I mean, it is up to you all to decide -- is this a state of the union?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: It is not formally a state of the union.

Q What do you consider it?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: It's an address for him to address the nation, talk about his economic package and legislative plan.

Q Why is it not a state of the union?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Again, this is just a formal, maybe semantic distinction, but there is a choice whether or not to call it a state of the union. The President is coming in as a new President. He has not been president over the last four years so it wouldn't be right for him to report on the last year's activities but he will be giving a report --

Q Has he become suddenly bashful about commenting on the Bush years?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: But it's not his state of the union. He will be commenting on his economic package which is what he's been focusing on for the last three weeks.

Q For the record doesn't it have to be classified as state of the union by Congress?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: No. It actually is not a state of the union.

Q No, I know it's not. I said the classification.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: No, the classification is not a state of the union.

Q I know that. But it could come from you or Congress, the classification of it.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: You'll have to check with the Speaker's office. I know that the President has decided that it will not be a state of the union, and I'm certain the Speaker's -- and we've chosen not to make it a state of the union.

Q Can I just follow-up on the -- you were going to check on the radio addresses. Has there been a designated time for them each week?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: No, I don't think that it will necessarily be the same time each week. The President liked doing it in the morning last week. I expect that he is going to do it in the morning again this week, but I don't have a set time every week.

Q Will there be briefings by Cabinet members next week, on the record briefings leading up to Wednesday's speech at the joint session of Congress?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I expect that the Cabinet members will be available, I don't know all their schedules.

Q You're not scheduling anything here?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Not right now, no.

Q There is a report that the European Community, at the request of the Japanese government, to advance the date of the Tokyo summit to this spring?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I don't know anything about it.

Q Did you get the receipt of the request?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: No.

Q Is he talking to Yeltsin this afternoon?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Not that I know of.

Q Moscow says that there's a conversation scheduled.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I'll doublecheck, but I don't -- I know that he was expecting to do it soon, but I don't know the exact timing of it.

Q What is the administration's policy on asking people up for its senior offices, what their sexual orientation is?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I don't believe that it's asked.

Q It's never asked?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Not that I know of, no.

Q Would someone's sexual orientation be considered and perhaps rejecting them for a position, or is that --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I don't believe so. Again, the President is against discrimination of all kinds.

Q When the President in the Cabinet meeting this morning said that he would like to see health facilities in different agencies, was he referring to, like, health club facilities in the different --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I think so, yes, and exercise rooms, gyms -- but he wants to make sure that if we have them in agencies, they're open to everyone.

Q Have they not been open to everybody?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I don't know that every agency has one. I know that there has been a policy of subsidizing memberships in private health clubs for certain officials, and the President wants to put an end to that.

Q I suppose the big job at the Pentagon is not open to everybody?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I don't know, but it will be.

Q Is he going to open the White House pool to the White House staff?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I think there is a health club in the new executive office building that's open to all White House staff.

Q George, when the Japanese delegation comes through to visit both the White House and the Treasury Secretary this week is there flexibility on the U.S. position on like semiconductors and auto industries? Because Japan is warning if we play as tough on trade as campaigned by Clinton that they will reciprocate and a trade war will begin. So, is there flexibility in these areas to avert a trade war with Japan if Japan complies with trying to promote world growth or reducing its surplus?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, the President doesn't want a trade war with Japan or any other nation. He does believe that we have to make sure that if we're going to have trade it is fair trade. And that will be the subject of discussions with the Japanese.

Q George, is there concern here that the door has somehow, inadvertently or not, been opened to all kinds of appeals from various interest groups and industries for trade protection and that he's now besieged with complaints and it's making it more difficult for him to pursue the free trade instincts he displayed as a candidate?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I don't think so. If agencies or if industries have a legitimate complaint there are procedures for them to file and to make their case. The President doesn't want to stop that. His agencies will be making, and he will be making, the final decisions. But the fact that industries actually apply for help is exactly the way the system is supposed to work.

Q However, some administrations have been more hospitable than others to such complaints and industry has always been sensitive and responsive to that. It appears that a number of industries now think that this is the time and this is the group and let's go for it.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I'm not sure that's true. We'll be doing our best. We'll take each one on a case-by-case basis. I believe I read, and I could be wrong, that the auto industry has actually decided not to pursue a broad based trade complaint. So, that's just one example in the opposite.

Q Perhaps thinking that the administration will carry the ball forward in trade talks?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, I can't read their minds. I just know that they haven't filed a complaint.

Q George, tomorrow Mickey Kantor is going to be meeting with Leon Brittan of the EC here, and one of the hot topics they'll be discussing, of course, is the GATT. And a specific point here, of course, is the fact that this fast track authority expires very shortly. Has there been any decision or even discussion about having the President seek an extension of fast track authority?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, certainly, it's been discussed but at this point the President just wants to do everything we can right now to make sure we get a good GATT agreement as soon as possible.

Q But they must have fast-track authority here. I mean, it will expire in March essentially.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: And we'll make a decision when we have to.

Q Why haven't they done anything with it?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, Mickey Kantor, Ambassador Kantor is working on it and we'll continue to have the discussions but right now the President insists that we have to do everything we can to get a good GATT agreement now.

Q I don't understand your answer. Does that mean he doesn't want the extension or that he thinks it can be done before that -- he can get a GATT agreement before March?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I think we have to do our best to get a GATT agreement right now and then we'll have a decision soon.

Q On the economic plan, you've said repeatedly in response to questions over the last couple of weeks that no decisions have been.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: It's true.

Q He supposed to be meeting with congressional leaders tomorrow to start briefing them on parameters for the plan. Does that imply that as of tomorrow decisions will have been made?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, not necessarily. He wants to hear what they have to say; he wants to ask them to support the general principles that he's moving forward on in the agreement. He won't have the final package until next Wednesday. But he can generally talk about the outlines of the plan with the members of Congress, hear what they're concerns are and ask for their support.

Q Presumably, he'll have decisions on this package made sometime prior to say noon on Wednesday because the speech has got to be written and do supporting documentation that has to be put together. Is there an internal deadline for when you've got to get all this stuff nailed down or can you do it sort of campaign speech style and start shoving pages until the teleprompter is unplugged?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: No, it is an internal deadline.

Q President Mitterrand today asked the U.S. to lift the economic embargo on Vietnam. Do you have any comment about that?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: All I can say is we've generally supported the roadmap policy. We want to make sure that we have a full accounting of all MIA's and that the policy will continue.

Q George, on a housekeeping matter. As a member of the correspondence board I've got a number of complaints about the fact that chains have been put up across the driveway. Today a group of photographers shooting the Cabinet members leaving were ordered out of the driveway by a uniformed Secret Service agent. And after they had complied one of the agents came up and grabbed, as they were shooting, the passes of at least one of the photographers who felt it was an attempt to intimidate him into not taking pictures. And I'd like to know if you have changed the policy, put up the chains for a reason, and if you've asked the Secret Service to enforce any kind of action against the press?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I'll have to check with the Secret Service. I mean, they are charged with the responsibility of protecting the President, and I wouldn't want to question anything they've done without knowing the facts, but I'll look into it.

Q But do you have a policy of keeping the press away from people coming out of the West Wing?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, as far as I know, that there was the normal set up outside the West Wing today.

Q The chains went up two days ago.

Q The chains are not normal.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: What are they blocking?

Q Us.

Q Us. They're keeping us significantly back from being able to question people as they leave.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I'll check on it.

Q George, on the 100,000 job cuts, is each agency responsible for a certain percentage of those, and how is it determined which jobs --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I think they will be developing the plans. I don't know if each agency is responsible for a certain percentage. I just know that that is the number you're going to get across the board. We'll have to get you more details when we have them.

Q George, on the AG, has he met with any other potential nominee besides Reno and what is the time line --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, he has met with several people to discuss the position.

Q Since Friday?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, I don't know. I can't get into the timing, but he has met with several people.

Q And the time frame?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I hope we'll have an announcement soon.

Q He has not met with Reno, right?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I said I wasn't sure whether he had met with her.

Q Are you curious? (Laughter.)

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Not particularly, no.

Q George, how old are you?

(Sings Happy Birthday.)

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Thank you very much. It says, "Happy Birthday from Leakers and Trial Balloon Floaters." Thank you.

END

1:10 P.M. EST

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

February 10, 1993

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN MEETING WITH CABINET MEMBERS

The Cabinet Room

10:33 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Ladies and gentlemen, I'm going to sign these executive orders, and then I will go over to the microphone and make a statement about each one.

The first order requires by attrition or reduction in federal positions of 100,000. The second order is a reduction in the administrative costs of the present federal government by three percent per year on average leading up to five percent in the fourth year of this four-year term and abolishing several boards and commissions. The third order deals with -- excuse me -- the third order deals with the commissions.

These are memoranda to the department heads -- one deals with perks, one deals with government vehicles, one deals with aircraft.

Members of the Cabinet and staff, tonight I will be going to Michigan and the Vice President will be going to California to hold town meetings with American citizens to talk to them about the economic problems and the budget mess that we have inherited and the priorities and principles we intend to bring to our efforts to change the country and bring about a recovery.

The people demand and deserve an active government on their side. But they don't want a government that wastes money, a government that costs more and does less. They voted for change. They wanted a literal revolution in the way government operates, and, now, you and I must deliver.

Yesterday I announced the reorganization of the White House staff that will reduce our staff by 25 percent and cut costs by \$10 million per year. Today I have called you, the members of the Cabinet, together to take the next step. To begin the overhaul of government as a whole. The steps we're taking today will save the American taxpayers \$9 billion. They won't be easy but they will make a difference. We have an obligation and an opportunity to change the way government works and to show that government can do more with less.

Our government needs change. For the last dozen years I've heard our leaders call loudly for less government while giving people more government and, perhaps more importantly, while giving almost no attention to better or different government; to new ways in which partnerships could be made with people in the private sector and in state and local governments.

Too often in the last decade people have rushed to defend the power of the few at the top and privileges of the elite not just in the private sector but also in government. Too often when economic security of ordinary Americans has been threatened, government has sat still, refused to lead not even follow, just get in the way. That era has come to an end with our coming to office.

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Today, the Cabinet and I are taking several steps to show that we intend to change the way that government works. But I want to make it clear this is only a beginning, not the end of the process.

First, I am ordering a reduction of the federal bureaucracy by at least 100,000 positions over the next four years. At least 10 percent of these cuts must come from senior management. The cuts must come -- can come from attrition; I see no need for layoffs. These cuts will make our government more efficient and more effective. The government is full of dedicated people whose hard work is being choked off by our own bureaucracy.

Second, I'm ordering each federal department and agency to reduce its administrative as opposed to its program costs by 12 percent over the next four years. With better planning and innovation we can make better use of the money we already have. In many agencies overhead is too high, red tape is too thick and the day-to-day operations of the agencies have not been reexamined in a very long time. I believe government can both care about people and be careful with their money.

Third, I am today ordering the elimination of hundreds of unproductive and duplicative advisory commissions that have spread across this government like kudzu. I'm asking the Office of Management and Budget to eliminate at least one third of the 700 advisory boards and commissions that were not created by Congress. From now on agencies and departments will not be allowed to create new commissions without permission from OMB. We simply cannot allow the federal bureaucracy to beget more bureaucracy.

Finally, we have to shrink the gulf between government and the average citizen. Too often success in Washington is measured not by results but by perks. Today I've issued three directives that will begin to limit perks and privileges that have driven a wedge between Washington and the public.

First, an end to wide spread use of home-to-office limousines by top officials. Second, a reduction and a reduction in the limousine fleets overall by half. Second, I'm tightening the rules for using government airplanes and ordering an inventory of the airplane fleet with an eye toward eliminating unnecessary planes. Many people believe that there are substantial savings here.

Finally, I'm ordering the elimination of such perks as below-cost executive dining rooms and free membership in private health clubs. However, I do want to say to you, as I just told the Cabinet before we came in, this administration was also elected to provide a health care plan for the American people including setting a good example. And one of the ways I want to do that is to keep people healthier. So, I will also encourage every government agency to provide health facilities in any building of any size, as long as they are provided on equal terms to all employees from the building maintenance people to the secretary of the department.

These executive orders are just a beginning but they're a good beginning. We will now move on to really try to find ways to reinvent the way government works and relates to people. How we can empower people more and entitle them less. How we can have more effective partnerships with the private sector and with state and local government. How we can find some of the dramatic productivity innovations that have characterized our finest companies over the last few years.

I'd like to now call upon a few of our Cabinet secretaries to discuss some of the things that they have been doing in their agencies beginning with the Labor Secretary, Secretary Reich.

SECRETARY REICH: Mr. President, eliminating executive perks isn't just about saving money. It's about good management-labor relations, as any good company will tell you. And once we got rid of our executive dining room and our executives actually had to eat in the cafeteria with normal employees, we saw an awful lot of interactions that had not happened before. And everybody, I think, is much to the better.

The good idea you had a couple of days ago with regard to unemployment insurance and trading, well that idea actually happened -- that came up from an employee down in the bottom of the department who had not been heard from for years. I am no longer, in fact, my predecessor was traveling I discovered by first class whenever my predecessor had to travel around the country. I'm traveling coach. Of course, I don't need the leg room. (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: It's easier for you.

SECRETARY REICH: I do want to emphasize we're just at the beginning. I've only been there three weeks and it feels like a longer period of time than that. But, again, there is in my mind an intimate relationship between opening up the doors, eliminating the perks, listening to employees and doing a better job. And we're trying.

THE PRESIDENT: Secretary O'Leary.

SECRETARY O'LEARY: Yes, Mr. President. I've taken a processes look at least my office and asked the question of everybody there what are we doing, why are we doing it, and how can we do it smarter and faster and in a way that invites people in rather than out. As a consequence, I've been able to reduce the secretaries own staff, my own staff by 40 percent. It occurs to me that within the coming year I can probably reduce it by 50 percent.

I've made my first trip just yesterday out into the country. As a consequence, I've reduced the staff required to support me when I'm out in the field by 50 percent. And I've also put out a request to my own people to reduce our fleet by 40 percent and having just heard the new goal, I think I can easily make 50 percent.

Those are just the things that I've done in my office. I think what the results will be is we'll have a faster turnaround time on everything we do. But perhaps more importantly, I've set the standard for everyone else in the Department. And we'll do an orderly examination of processes and we can bring this to the table. I feel encouraged by it and I know we can do it.

THE PRESIDENT: I also appreciate what you've done to make the building more accessible over there.

SECRETARY O'LEARY: Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Secretary Cisneros.

SECRETARY CISNEROS: Mr. President, we've acted to act on some of the perks and some of the things we can do immediately -- freeze on promotions and a freeze on all new hires; a cutting of subscriptions to newspapers and magazines, which it seemed were piling up in every reception room and all over the building. Found that there were some 30-odd newsletters that were published by the Department, either for it's own people or for external use, and we're working on consolidating those 30 into those that are official memoranda and those that are required for other kinds of communication. We've reduced the number of cellular phones and pagers and taken a number of measures of that type. Prohibited all

flying by first class, which apparently had been done before and so forth.

But the most important thing, I think, is -- will pay for it over the longer run. Taking a cue from your own themes of reinventing government, we are going to create an effort we'll call reinventing HUD. It will start with a management level goal-setting session on a weekend, a few weeks from now, to look at how we can establish measurable, attainable goals by which we can be held accountable; that we're actually performing the mission of the organization over a period of time. Then what we hope to do is share those goals with the whole Department and have a bottoms-up process with people out in the field and out in the regions and the 13,000 employees that is that organization tell us how we can streamline and reorganize far beyond the Secretary's office, throughout the country of this organization. It is very troubled, it needs to be rethought in some fundamental ways and this reinventing HUD project is a way, not only to do it, but to get some buy-in and some stake-holding from the employees throughout the structure. It is a process that will start immediately.

THE PRESIDENT: Secretary Babbitt.

SECRETARY BABBITT: Well, we've started the reinventing government process and made some interesting findings like several of the other secretaries. I have found a motor pool which looks like sort of the equivalent of an airline. I mean, way too many vehicles, carrying way too many people to way too many unnecessary destinations. We've closed the executive dining room. I was astounded to find that the cafeteria at Interior is actually very good, much better than anything I had encountered during my tenure in Arizona. (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, there goes Arizona. (Laughter.) We only lost it by a point, I thought you could put us over the top and here we go. (Laughter.)

SECRETARY BABBITT: I've taken a look at the management structure and there's way too much top management in Interior. I found, for example, that each assistant secretary had two or three deputy assistant secretaries and what we've done is decided that assistant secretaries ought to be wise enough and good enough to have one deputy assistant secretary.

Perhaps my most interesting discovery was what I would call pony perks. This is in the form of a plan to build a vastly expanded equestrian center at the Manassas National Battlefield in Virginia. It turns out that the National Park Service, which runs the place, was hotly opposed to this line-item in the appropriations budget. And it turned out that it consists of a secretarial plan to build this equestrian center for the convenience of politicians and high-ranking officials and that, in fact, is entirely unnecessary. That particular plan is dead as of today.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, thank you. One of us has had a big problem to deal with in the last few days and my impression is that he's done quite well. I'd like to ask Secretary Espy just to give a report about the crisis he's been dealing with and what his recommendation has been.

SECRETARY ESPY: Thank you, Mr. President. I thank you for allowing me to use the good graces of your office to go to the state of Washington last week. I talked to the Vice President and Les Aspin about going and appreciate the opportunity to make the trip. I spent a day out there talking to some of the families of the children who unfortunately met their death because they ate a tainted hamburger. I gave testimony at the Washington State Senate; I talked to the governor.

And we've done a lot since then. We've talked to the industry representatives, consumer representatives. Tomorrow I meet with whistle-blowers. I'll have something to say about how meat is inspected in these federally certified slaughterhouse plants. And we have a pretty good idea of a short-term and a long-term strategy that we in part recommended and will be recommended to you and to OMB.

We inspect meat like we inspected it in 1930, and we just simply have to make some changes. We know that these pathogens that we talk about cannot be detected by visual observation; we've got to move towards a science-based system and we're beginning to do that. This particularly virulent strain of this E.coli is nothing new. We've known since 1982 that people die from eating this stuff. And I'm just really surprised that we haven't done more since 1982 to move toward a more science-based system. So we've done a couple of things. We've recommended the hiring of more meat inspectors and I'm thankful that you have included as such in your strategy for the economy. I really appreciate it and we really need it because we need to assure the public that what can be seen will be seen.

Secondly, we should talk to the industry about keeping better records. The great part of this is that we were able to contain this meat and detain it because this particular slaughterhouse kept very good records. So, we realized the points at which we could retrieve and we've done that.

Handling labels and care labels because if you cook this meat at 155 degrees, that eliminates most of the problem. And so we need to do that. Then we talked about organic acid washes at the slaughterhouse level just to remove the pathogens on the carcass and the other long-term strategies.

I met yesterday, Mr. President, with a gentleman from the University of Georgia who last year submitted a research proposal to USDA to develop a E.coli culture test that will allow us to aculturate this within less than 24 hours. And this petition was denied by USDA. So, we've asked him to resubmit it. So, we've got a long-term strategy and a short-term strategy and I appreciate the opportunity to let you know.

THE PRESIDENT: Anybody else like to be heard.

Q Mr. President, changing the subject, since Secretary Christopher is going to talk about Bosnia this afternoon, could you at least tell us are U.S. troops a part of the initiative that will be unveiled this afternoon?

THE PRESIDENT: I think I should let Secretary Christopher give his speech first. We have all worked very hard on this Bosnia policy ever since we took office and even before trying to find a way to do more but do it with the support of our allies and through the United Nations. I think I'll let him give his speech and then I'll be glad to answer questions about the policies after he does.

Q Do you think the public --

THE PRESIDENT: I think the public will support the policy that he will outline today, yes. I think they will want us to do more and want us to do it in a prudent way. And I think that that they will support this policy.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

10:52 A.M. EST

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Southfield, Michigan)

For Immediate Release

February 10, 1993

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN "TOWN MEETING WITH BILL CLINTON"

WXYZ-TV Station
Southfield, Michigan

(All names are spelled phonetically.)

8:00 P.M. EST

MR. BONDS: Good evening, everybody. I'm Bill Bonds, WXYZ Detroit, and I'll be your moderator for tonight's town meeting with President Bill Clinton, which we begin from our studios here at WXYZ, just outside Detroit, right in the middle of the Rust Belt of America.

For his first major appearance out of the White House since taking office just 21 days ago, the President decided that he wanted to go directly to you, the American people. He obviously likes the format; apparently figures, look, it worked in the campaign, so if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

The President is going to be taking your questions from all across our land, but this time through local television stations and not the traditional national media. And this question, very frankly, kind of hangs over this particular town meeting: Can everyday Americans ask the tough questions, perhaps tell their President, hey, look, you didn't answer my question; you ducked it; you gave me some political double-talk. Well, let's find out.

Mr. President, welcome to this evening's town meeting. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Let me, first of all, thank all of you for being here in Michigan, and thank our audiences in Washington and Georgia and Florida for joining us, and all the people across this country who are watching this event.

I started doing these televised town meetings a year ago in New Hampshire. Between June and November I did nine that were televised alone, including one here at this station. And I wanted to come out of the White House three weeks to the day after I became President because I can see now, after only three weeks, how easy it is for a President to get out of touch, to be caught up in the trappings of Washington, and basically to be told by people that nothing needs to be changed or you can't change things.

Let me just briefly say -- I want to take as much time as possible for questions, but I want to say one or two things real quickly. I believe I got elected on a commitment to change America -- to create jobs, try to raise incomes, to face the health care crisis, to try to liberate the government from special interests and turn it back to the people. And to try to reduce the deficit and put America on a path to long-term health and recovery, bringing the American people together.

MORE

put America on a path to long-term health and recovery, bringing the American people together.

There's been some good news and bad news since I won the election. The good news is that productivity of American firms is up. People are buying houses because interest rates are down. Consumer confidence is up since the election. I like that. People think things are going to be better.

There's been some bad news. With all these economic improvements, we aren't generating new jobs, and the deficit of this country is about \$50 billion a year bigger than I was told it was going to be before the election.

So we have to put together a plan that keeps my commitments to you, invest in you, in your jobs, in your education, your health care and your future; that brings that debt down; that deals with the health care crisis; and that does it in a way that's fair to all Americans.

I've got another week -- I've been working almost exclusively on the economic issues of the country since I became President. I've got another week to put it together. And I wanted to come up here tonight and just listen to your questions, answer them as candidly as I could, and share with you as much as I can my feelings about where we're going to go.

But I'll say this: All the hundreds of thousands, and maybe a million miles that I've traveled, I never saw one person along the highway with a sign that said, "Things are just fine the way they are; don't change anything. (Laughter.) So I'm going to keep trying to change, and I'm going to try to stay in touch with you this whole four years so that you can honestly tell me what you think.

I'm really proud of the fact that the voter turnout was not only up, we not only had the biggest crowd for the Inauguration in history, but the mail and the phone calls in the White House are running at record levels. Some good, some critical. But that's good, that's democracy. And it proves that people really feel, at least so far, that I'm going to listen and try to move forward. And that's what we're here to do tonight. So let's begin. (Applause.)

MR. BONDS: Thank you very much, Mr. President. You know, in reality there are several town meetings tonight besides our audience here at WXYZ. The President is going to be taking questions from people in three other major American cities. From the far northwest, we welcome the people at station KOMO in Seattle, Washington. Ken Schramm will be the moderator, bringing us questions from the people of that evergreen state; Ann Bishop, our moderator from Station WPLG in Miami, Florida; from our station in Atlanta, Georgia, Bill Nigut taking questions from the people visiting him at Station WSB.

The response from the people in these American cities has been overwhelming. And we'll begin right now by taking a question from a member of the audience here at WXYZ in Detroit, and see if this bird's going to fly tonight.

Our first question is from Susan Esser. Susan Esser was the political coordinator for the Ross Perot campaign for the presidency in the state of Michigan. I suspect this is going to be about -- well, it's the economy, stupid, as we heard -- the economy.

Q The American people, Mr. President, feel that Congress does not have the political will to balance the budget.

If this is true, and, as you say, if the economy is your priority, will you support a strong balanced budget amendment -- one that is not watered down, and with us, send a signal to Congress that we need them to face the issue? And when can we expect Washington to start to solve this enormous problem of ours?

THE PRESIDENT: I think you can, first of all, I'm not for any version of the balanced budget amendment that I have seen because I think it is basically a gimmick and a way of putting the decision off that would give us five years to deal with it. Secondly, if we balanced the budget tomorrow we'd drive unemployment up because it would require such terrible sacrifices.

We need to do -- I hate to say this again, but if you look at what the Japanese did, they had a huge deficit in the 1970s -- about as big, even a little bigger than ours is now. And they brought it down over about a 10-year period until, in 1990, they were the only major industrial country with a balanced budget -- one reason, they had low unemployment and high growth.

So what I -- let me just tell you what I'm going to do, and I wouldn't rule out other measures later. I'm going to try to get the Congress to pass the modified line-item veto bill that the House passed the last time and the Senate didn't. I strongly support it. I'm going to try to pass a strong campaign finance reform law and a lobby reform law to free the Congress of undue influence of special interests. I'm going to ask them to cut spending, and dramatically, across a broad range of areas, and to raise some more money to try to bring this deficit down in a dramatic way that will send a signal that we're in control of our own house again and we're going to lower interest rates as a result of it and get this economy going again. I think that's what we want.

The important thing is not to balance the budget overnight, but to put it on a steady and decided downward tack. If we don't do it -- let me just say, there's no virtue in any of this unless it helps you.

Let me just answer -- a lot of people say to me, why do you want to balance the budget? It's no fun cutting spending or raising more money to balance the budget or reduce the deficit. If you reduce the deficit, the United States doesn't borrow so much money. We have more of your tax money to spend on the education of your children or on developing new jobs or on health care. We keep interest rates down and it's easier for you to borrow money in the private sector, so you create more jobs. If the deficit gets bigger and bigger and bigger every year, it weakens the economy.

So we have to do two things at once that no government in your country's history has ever done. We've got to increase investment in jobs and reduce the deficit. And we're going to do it. And I think we can start next week. Look at my plan. See how you like it and see if the Congress responds. I predict to you that they will respond in a bipartisan fashion and reduce the debt for the first time in a long time.

MR. BONDS: Mr. President, we've kicked it off with that first question. Thank you, Susan. We're going to keep this moving right along. Let me throw it now and link up with Ann Bishop from Station WPLG in Miami.

Q Thank you very much, Bill. And with me is an attorney, and she has a question for the President.

Q Why did you choose to tackle the gays in the military and the family leave bill first, versus getting right to the economy and the federal deficit?

THE PRESIDENT: I didn't -- I did choose the family leave bill first -- let me answer the question separately. I chose to deal with the family leave bill because I knew there was a majority support in both Houses for it, and because I thought it was a pro-family bill. I thought it was a bill that would be helpful to strengthen the American family with so many people forcibly in the work force. It contained an exemption for small business. It had been passed twice by the Congress before and vetoed. I thought it would help families and illustrate we had ended gridlock.

I didn't choose to -- I tried to put off the gays in the military issue for six months. Senators in the other party wanted it dealt with now. They saw it as a way to delay family leave and to throw the whole federal government into debating that. I actually spent very little time on the issue myself. I met with the Joint Chiefs on a number of issues, including that. Met with the Senate Democrats on the Armed Services Committee. But I was, frankly, appalled that we spent so much time the first week talking about that instead of how to get the economy going again. It wasn't my idea. My agreement with the Joint Chiefs was to study the issue for six months, so we could focus immediately on the economy. Thank goodness that's what we're now doing.

Q Some people say you probably would have been better off if you sat down with Sam Nunn and a couple of -- maybe somebody like Admiral Crowe, a couple of the heavyweights in the U.S. Senate and say, look, how do I approach this thing with the Joint Chief of Staff, and not get the mess that we got into.

THE PRESIDENT: That's just what we did do. I met -- the Joint Chiefs wanted to meet with me on that and other issues. I met with them. Senator Nunn got into this because I asked him to. I hate that it was written, particularly in Georgia, that there was some conflict between us. I asked him to help me craft a resolution to do what the Joint Chiefs asked, which was to review it for six months and to put it off. We did our best, but there were others in the Senate, mostly Republicans, who just wanted to debate it to death because they thought it was hurting the other efforts we were making. And now we're on the economy, and that's where we ought to stay.

MR. BONDS: Mr. President, we're going to switch now to Atlanta, a little bit closer to your hometown part of the country. Bill Nigut, WSB. Bill.

Q Mr. President, we're glad that you could join us by satellite from Detroit. We're going to start with someone who is a bit concerned about at least one of the campaign promises that she believes you made and yet she feels -- you're not quite sure he's going to follow through on it.

Q I'm concerned about your campaign promise to not raise the taxes for the middle class, how you intend to keep that promise.

Q Did you vote for President Clinton?

Q Yes, I did.

Q Was that one reason you did?

Q Yes, I did.

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THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, I did put out a plan which didn't contain a middle class tax increase, but I also repeatedly said -- and I said in the debates in front of 100 million people -- I refuse to say "read my lips," that's not responsible.

Now, what's happened since the election. We have been told since the election that the federal debt every year is going to be \$50 billion bigger than we were told it was before the election. I wish I could promise you that I won't ask you to pay anymore. But I can tell you this: look what I'm doing. I'm doing my best to keep my campaign commitments.

I have, first of all, started by cutting the government. I cut the White House staff by 25 percent yesterday. I bet that's never happened in the lifetime of anybody in this audience. And it's real cuts. Today, I announce \$9 billion in cuts in the central administration of the federal government -- \$9 billion. I have also said that before I ask the middle class to pay, I'm going to ask the wealthiest Americans and companies who made money in the '80s and had their taxes cut to pay their fair share. And I'm going to cut more government spending. But I cannot tell you that I won't ask you to make any contribution to the changes we have to make.

We have got to do two things at the same time. We've got to bring the debt down for the reasons that the first questioner so clearly articulated. And, secondly, we've got to invest more in creating new jobs, in educating people and providing health care for all Americans and controlling cost.

I'm doing my best to do that in a way that is fairest to middle class America. But I have to be honest with you, the debt is \$50 billion a year bigger than we were told it was before the election. I'm doing my best. I have done nothing almost for three weeks but wrestle with this budget, try to cut costs and find ways to finance what we have to do. But we've got to change what we're doing.

Let me say I do have an alternative. I could play the same kind of games with you that have been played for the last 10 or 12 years -- and this is not a partisan comment, this happened out of Washington -- I could give you a bunch of smoke and mirrors and pretend the deficit is not there, and then three or four years from now, we'd be spending 20 cents of every tax dollar paying off the debt, and it's not right.

So I'm going to do the best I can. Listen to what I say next week. Decide whether you think it's fair, and tell me and your senators and congressmen whether you think I'm right or wrong.

MR. BONDS: Mr. President, there are a lot of people who are convinced that the federal government doesn't spend enough money battling crime. I don't have to tell you about the mean streets of America. This man is John Marbury. His son was killed in the city of Detroit for a leather jacket.

Right, Mr. Marbury?

Q Yes. I would like to ask Mr. Clinton -- what advice would he give to the administrations of these large urban areas of how to get rid of these illegal handguns and curbing the violence with an immediate impact?

THE PRESIDENT: I wish I knew how to have an immediate impact. And I thank you for having the courage to come here tonight, with all the pain you must feel.

Let me tell you where I think we ought to begin. We ought to begin by passing the crime bill that nearly passed last year, which does two things: It gives the urban areas of this country more police officers for the streets. I have been in areas that were dominated by drugs, by weapons and by murders, which are now virtually crime-free because they have enough policemen. They have neighborhood policemen walking the streets on every block, working with their neighbors. That's the first thing.

The second thing that bill has is the Brady bill that would require a waiting period before people could buy handguns. And the third thing we probably ought to do is do what Governor Wilder in Virginia is trying to do. It takes a lot of guts to do that, but he's trying to pass a law which says that you can't buy a handgun more than once a month. Try to stop all these people that go to legal gun stores and buy guns, and then turn around and just give them to kids like they're going out of style.

So those are three places that I think we ought to start. And if you've got any other ideas, I'd like to have them. I think the problem of violence among young people, particularly in our inner cities and not all big cities, is maybe the biggest problem we've got today in terms of their future and the future of our cities. I can't get -- I'm now preparing a jobs package for the Congress that I want to try to boost the job-creating capacity of the economy for the next year or so while we bring the deficit down, because I don't want unemployment to go up.

And one of the things I want to do is give extra incentives for companies to invest in inner cities. But they're not going to do it if they think it's not safe. You can't have a job in a place where people can't walk to work safely.

MR. BONDS: The most powerful lobby perhaps in the U.S. Congress is the NRA, and they don't want gun control. How are you going to overcome that?

THE PRESIDENT: We're going to fight to change. All I can tell you is, that's what I hired on to do. I may not win every battle I fight, but that's one of the changes we ought to make. And let me say, I live in a state where more than half the people have a hunting or fishing license, or both. I believe in the right to keep and bear arms, I believe in the right to hunt. I believe in all this. I do not believe that we're well served by having a bunch of 14- or 15-year-old kids out there with handguns shooting each other because of blood battles between gangs or because they're mad or because they're high on drugs. It's wrong. We've got to do something about it.

MR. BONDS: We've had some difficulty linking up with our station out in Seattle. We switch there now to Ken Schramm, KOMO.

Q Thanks, Bill. I'd like to introduce Larry Brown, who is a machinist with the Boeing Company. I'm going to go out on a limb here and suggest that perhaps you have a question concerning the economy.

Q I certainly do. Good evening, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Good evening, Larry.

Q Yesterday the Boeing Company announced that there would be 16,000 layoffs here in Seattle. Recently, Pratt Whitney announced 10,000 layoffs, and over 200,000 aerospace workers have lost their jobs in Southern California. At last report, the governments in Europe involved with the Airbus Consortium have subsidized their industry to a tune of \$26 billion. My question is, how can America meet the challenge of maintaining our leadership in the very important aerospace industry?

THE PRESIDENT: The answer, I think, is twofold: First, a lot of those aerospace workers who lost their jobs, lost their jobs because of cutbacks in defense, which had to come at the end of the Cold War. That is, we couldn't keep spending so much more than all of our competitors in these high-wage countries on defense without paying an economic price for it. But we shouldn't have cut defense as much as we did in terms of high-tech, high-wage employment without a plan to reinvest in other industries, in other technologies, to put those people to work.

So the first thing we have to do is to invest more in converting these high-wage jobs to other technologies.

The second thing we need to do, frankly, is to take serious look at the aerospace industry itself. The Congress passed a bill last year that was never enacted that we're now trying to get up and going, where I will appoint someone and they will appoint some people to a commission to focus on how to rebuild the aviation industry in our country in two ways: Number one, people who work for Boeing, McDonnell Douglas and other subsidiary companies -- how can we get more jobs in making these planes and selling them at home and around the world. And number two, how can we do something about the commercial airlines themselves to avoid further bankruptcies and massive layoffs like we've got a Florida station here with us tonight, Miami, who has been devastated by layoffs at Eastern and Pan Am.

So we are going to work on that. And I assure you that I'm going to have a strategy to try to invest in commercial aviation. And we're also going to either have to -- either the Europeans are going to have to quit subsidizing Airbus and trying to deny us access to those contracts, which is something else that's going on now, or we're going to have to meet the competition. I am not going to roll over and play dead.

Seven -- seven technologies are going to shape the highways jobs of the future. And one of the biggest is commercial aviation. The United States has a lead there. We are losing it because we have not fought to maintain it. And I assure you, as soon as I get this budget and this investment plan, this jobs program sent up to the Congress, we're going to start working on defense conversion and aerospace. (Applause.)

MR. BONDS: We're going to switch now to Ann Bishop, WPLG, Miami.

Q Thank you very much, Bill. And, of course, we've not only had the devastation of the air industry, but also Hurricane Andrew. And I want you to meet now the Reverend Walter Richardson, who certainly lives in the area that was hardest hit.

Q Good evening, Mr. President. On August 24th, many of the things that we had in the south Florida area were gone. One of the things that was gone because of Hurricane Andrew was Homestead Air Force Base. What plans do we have, do you have, for the restoration of Homestead Air Force Base?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, let me talk generally about the hurricane. There is a lot of aid left to go to south Florida, which has been approved, but not spent, that's tied up in various government pipelines. Some of it was not pushed through under the previous administration. But I have to say, frankly, some of it was slowed down because of the transition -- the change of governments. That happens. And I'm going to put someone on that next week because of something Governor Chiles said to me. I want to put one person in charge of making sure that all the assistance that's supposed to go to south Florida for Hurricane Andrew actually goes there as quickly as possible. We'll run through all those departments and try to push it out.

On Homestead Air Force Base -- in the campaign, President Bush said that he would just rebuild it while we were closing a lot of other air force bases. The Congress voted against that and said Homestead had to be considered along with all other bases. I agree with that. I think we have to consider Homestead along with all other air bases. There's a base commission and they will evaluate the needs for it.

But let me say what I believe based on having spent an enormous amount of time in south Florida and having talked to your congressional delegation about it and others. I think that is an invaluable asset. I think it is important to rebuild enough support systems so that all the retired military personnel around the air base at least don't lose the dependence they had on it and turn around and leave your community, which would be bad for you.

I think it's important to find a mission for Homestead. And I believe that there are a number of multiple use missions which are potential. We may even have joint use between military and commercial uses. I've given a good deal of thought to it, and it's one of the things that I want to talk to you folks about. Now, if it clears the base closing commission, it will just be rebuilt with its mission. If it doesn't, then I think we need to look at whether there is a mixed use for it as both a military and commercial mission.

It's an incredible resource for south Florida and it has to be used as a part of the rebuilding process. So if the base is not rebuilt because the base closing commission doesn't recommend it, then I'll help you do something else with it to generate an equal amount of jobs.

Q Thank you, Mr. President.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. We'll throw it back to you, Bill now in Detroit.

MR. BONDS: Okay, thank you very much Ann. We switch now to Bill Nigut, WSB, in Atlanta, Georgia. Bill.

Q Bill Bonds, as you know, the issue of lifting the ban on gays in the military has been a particularly heated one here in the south. Roger Turner wants to ask you, Mr. President, why you want to do it. Tell the President why you don't want him to lift the ban and see if he can respond to that.

Q Having served in the United States Navy for five years aboard a guided missile destroyer and also doing isolated duty in Alaska, and as a Christian and having the opportunity to minister to a number of men in the Navy, I believe it would just add continued undue pressure on the situation that's already pressure-packed to begin with. And I want to

know, why do you want to lift the ban and what impact do you see the ban having on the military?

MR. BONDS: Mr. President, does it surprise you to hear a minister -- we also have a minister standing here who very much wants the ban lifted. Does it surprise you to hear a minister say we should keep the ban in place or continue a discriminatory pattern?

THE PRESIDENT: Absolutely not. Because a lot of ministers of the gospel believe that homosexuality is morally wrong and, therefore, that ground alone is enough to justify the ban.

Let me tell you why I favor lifting it very briefly. We have now -- and everyone concedes we have always had -- homosexual men and women in the military service. I received a letter from a retired officer -- a woman -- the other day who told me she left the service because she could not be honest about her sexual orientation, even though she was a distinguished officer with a remarkable service record -- one of many such letters I have received. Your government spent \$500 million to get rid of about 16,300 homosexuals from the service in the 1980s.

Now, here's my position. If there are homosexual men and women in the service anyway -- if we know they have served with distinction and they have always been there, the issue is should you be able to say what you are and not be kicked out. This is not about conduct; this is about status. I believe there ought to be the strictest code of behavioral conduct applicable here. I also believe there ought to be an even stricter code applicable to sexual harassment, whether homosexual or heterosexual. The biggest sexual problem in the armed services, according to the men and women who talked to me, involves heterosexual harassment.

I think there ought to be a tough code of conduct. If people do wrong, they ought to be gotten out. But I think people should not be asked to lie if they're going to be allowed to serve, because the question is not whether they should be there or not. They are there. So the narrow question of this debate is should you be able to stay and admit it.

The military itself has admitted they should stop asking people when they join. That's the position of the Joint Chiefs. So the only question here is should you be able to say that you're a homosexual if you do nothing wrong. I say yes. Others say no. The military is setting the practical problems about duty assignments and other things, and we'll revisit this in about six months. (Applause.)

MR. BONDS: I want to advise my stations along the link-up that it's time for us to take a break here. They'll be taking a break. Speaking about the military, we have military forces in the Persian Gulf. We have military forces still in the Kuwait area. Are we going over to Bosnia-Herzegovina? And we'll be back with that question for you, Mr. President, in just a moment? (Applause.)

* * *

MR. BONDS: I appreciate your enthusiasm. I think we'd save a little time if we'd hold the applause to the end so that you could get more questions in, the President of the United States could get more answers in. So you do what you want to do, but we feel it would be better -- that we have troops in the

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Middle East, we have troops in Somalia. Are we going to go into Yugoslavia? That's this young lady's question.

Q Good evening, Mr. President. Serbian death camps and rape camps have shocked the world. And today we have heard Mr. Warren Christopher stating that he supports negotiated settlement in Bosnia. How does one negotiate with war criminals without a clear enforcement to let them know that they have to stop with the atrocity? And how does one ensure that the Serbs will not continue with their atrocities and that they will negotiate in good faith, and that they will lay down the arms?

Will you ask NATO for their enforcement of the terms of agreement and give them the authority to use force in this case? And will you also help Croatia regain its sovereignty on the territories it's lost so that 700,000 people can return to their homes? Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: I'm glad you asked the question in the way you did. I was afraid you were going to ask me why we agreed to get involved in this process today.

Just for the benefit of the people who don't know as much about it as you, let me tell you what happened today. Today, the Secretary of State announced a new policy by our government that we would agree to become more involved in what is going on in Bosnia -- not in committing our ground troops now or anything like that, but in trying to get involved in these negotiations, to protect the rights and the integrity of the Bosnians, the Croats and others, who have been basically subject to the assaults of the Serbs.

That we would be in a position to say we're not going to enforce a peace agreement on the Croats or the Bosnians that they don't believe in, but that if we could get an agreement, then the United States would participate -- not alone, but with the United Nations and with Europe in guaranteeing that the agreement would protect the basic human rights of the people involved and the terms of the agreement.

Now, people say -- so we are not committing today to make war in the former Yugoslavia. We are committing to try to help get a peace and then to enforce it. Why is that? Because if we don't, number one, the terrible principle of ethnic cleansing will be validated; that one ethnic group can butcher another if they're strong enough to do it at the end of the Cold War. Number two, that problem could spread to other republics and nations near there.

Never forget: It's no accident that World War I started in this area. There are ancient ethnic hatreds that have consumed people and led to horrible abuses. You know about it -- the rapes of the women, the murders of the children -- all these things you have read about. We've got to try to contain it.

And I think we have to be very much stronger standing up to aggression. We've got to get the heavy weapons out of utilization -- you implied that. We've got to toughen the embargo against the Serbs. We ought to open a United Nations war crimes inquiry, and we ought to enforce the no-fly zone against Serbian aircraft -- strongly. Those are the things that I think we should do.

I do not believe that the military of the United States should get involved unilaterally there now. We have to work with these other countries. And I might say that that's the position that General Powell and our foreign policy folks have

taken. But this is a much more aggressive position than the United States has taken.

But I can tell you, folks: We're not going to make peace over there in a way that's fair to the minorities that are being abused unless we get involved. And if we don't get involved and the thing spreads all over creation over there, then we'll be pulled into it in horrible ways that could be very dangerous to our people. So we ought to do what is right now. It's also what is safest for the United States.

MR. BONDS: But isn't it a reality, Mr. President, that if the United States doesn't get involved and doesn't lead, nothing is going to change?

THE PRESIDENT: I think that it is reality that if we don't get involved, either nothing will change or the Bosnians will be wrecked and the Croatians will be hurt badly.

MR. BONDS: And it could still spread after that.

THE PRESIDENT: And it could go into Kosivo, which is next door; it could go into Macedonia. You could involve the Turks, you could involve the Greeks. We could have a serious problem.

MR. BONDS: Then you've got a major policy decision to make.

THE PRESIDENT: I just did it. (Laughter.) We're going to get involved --

MR. BONDS: I don't think she thinks you did make it.

THE PRESIDENT: Let me just say -- the United States has learned one thing: When we operate -- look at the Gulf War. If we operate with the support of the United Nations and with the support of Europe and with the support of our allies, we can do a lot of things at an acceptably low cost of life -- and get something done. If we go off on our own and everybody else is over here, we can't get it done.

I have to deal with the fact that Europe believes today that negotiations are possible; that Russia wants negotiations from a different point of view, and even though they've been historically sympathetic to the Serbs, they have supported our position that we ought to toughen the embargo and stand up to aggression.

And if I go in there, the United States now takes a leadership role, I think there's a real chance we can stop some of the killing, stop the ethnic cleansing and get a peace agreement. And then we'll have to help enforce it. She's absolutely right. If we don't have an enforcement mechanism, you won't be able to do it. But I believe this is the best thing to do for the Croatians and for the Bosnians and for humanity at large in the former Yugoslavia. I think it's the right thing to do.

Q Thank you. Mr. President, my understanding is that while you were en route tonight's program, while aboard Air Force One you called an area hospital because you were concerned and wanted to speak to some parents and some children who have been affected by the E. coli bacteria contamination in this area. I'd like to introduce Vicky and Darrin Detweiler, whose 16-month-old son remains in critical condition at Takoma's Mary

Bridge hospital. And they have a question concerning health care.

Q Mr. President, actually our child is at Children's Hospital in Seattle, but he is in intensive care, in critical condition. And only two days prior to him going in there with E. coli poisoning from tainted meat, my husband lost his job and we were left without medical coverage.

I'm Canadian originally, and always took comfort in the medical system there and in knowing that my children would be taken care of. My question to you now is, what are you prepared to do in regards to the tainted meat problem, and is there any hope in the near future of seeing universal health care so no one else has to go through what we've gone through? (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Let me, first of all, say I thank you for being on the program and I hope your child will be well. I did call two other sets of parents who are in the hospital with their children on the way out here just to inquire about that and to get their ideas about what we should do.

Let me answer your second question first. As I'm sure you know, I've asked my wife to head a task force to come up with a bill within 100 days which will bring a new system of health care to America which offers us the chance to provide basic health coverage to everybody, to stop people from losing their health coverage when they lose a job, to stop people from their inability to change jobs because they've had someone in their family sick, and to bring the cost of health care in line with inflation.

I think we can do that. And if we don't do it, we'll never balance the budget, and we'll never restore health to this economy. Fifty percent of the projected deficit growth between now and the year 2000 is all in health care costs. So it is a terrific human issue, but it's a big economic issue for Americans. And the answer to your question is, within 100 days of my becoming President, we're going to have a bill to the Congress to do just what you've said.

Now, the second thing -- this E. coli thing -- have you all been following it up in Washington? It's a -- I asked the Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy, who is responsible for the regulation of the slaughterhouses and the meat before it comes to a restaurant, to go up there and look into the situation. And we think there are two things that have to be done.

First of all, we've got to make it clear to people who are providing the fast food that they've got to do everything they can to comply with our cooking regulations. Some of those viruses would have clearly died had the heat been observed. On the other hand, we've got to find ways to do more inspections and to try to do them in a more effective way.

And so we are reviewing now the possibility of not only hiring more inspectors, which I've already agreed to do, but secondly, seeing if there is some way we can do a better job of actually inspecting the meat -- empowering the inspectors to do some more things.

We have got to do that. And I can tell you, if you have any more ideas I'd like to have them. The parents that I talked to today had some -- actually, some quite good ideas that we're going to pursue. And I want to invite you and any others who are listening who have other ideas to let me know. But you

can look forward to more inspectors, and we're looking for ways to inspect better as well.

MR. BONDS: In that case, you're increasing government.

THE PRESIDENT: We are there. But that's a direct service to people. That's not a waste of bureaucracy. I think the American people want us to make sure they're safe if we can. (Applause.)

Q Mr. President, I'm a former Pan American Airline employee and I'm still unemployed at this time. And I would like to know if you have any new provisions for people who suffer from big industries' traumas.

THE PRESIDENT: Let me tell you, we're going to try to do two things. One is to provide a much more comprehensive program of retraining and job placement. And secondly is to try to have a strategy available when we know that major, major industries are going to shut down to try to do conversion -- to try to provide investment opportunities for new kinds of economic activities.

This is not -- I said earlier something that I probably should have broadened -- this is not just a problem in defense industries. It's also a problem in other big employers. As we're in Michigan tonight, as the people in Michigan know, the biggest companies in America did nothing but basically lay off people in the 1980s and the early '90s. Even when they were making more money, they restructured.

For the last 10 years, until two or three ago, a lot of the jobs that were lost by big companies were made up by jobs that were created by small companies. About two or three years ago, that process slowed to a halt because of the cost of health care to small business, because of the general recession, because of the credit crunch.

So my answer to your question is we're going to be much more aggressive than American governments have been in the past in trying to find ways to deal with these problems when we know in advance they're coming, and go in and give people the chance to restructure their lives, to rebuild them and try to create other kinds of economic activities with new partnerships in the private sector.

We're also going to try to change the tax system to favor investment more. That is, we want to raise the corporate tax rate some. But then we want to say if you want to lower your taxes, invest more and you can lower your taxes if you invest to create jobs. And I think that will help a lot. We're going to try to do that.

Q I have a follow-up on Homestead and some of that training. We obviously have plenty of space down here to have it done. But what kind of training are you going to give someone who's middle-aged or even older, but who still needs to work?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think that is both the burden and the excitement of the time in which we live. That is, there is nothing I or any public official can do about the fact that the average 18-year-old American today will change jobs about eight times in a lifetime. Even if you keep working for the same company. If you're lucky enough never to be laid off, in order to keep a job, an 18-year-old today will have to be retrained to do eight different jobs. So whether we like it or

not, middle-aged people will have to keep learning new things, developing new skills.

Now, that will be very exciting and interesting for people in their middle and later years if we can spare them of the gnawing insecurity of thinking they're going to be thrown on to the scrap heap of history, they're going to lose their job and never get another one, or they're going to lose their job and then getting another one making one-third of what they used to make. That's our great challenge. And we are working on it. That is something that I think America ought to be able to lead the world in, and now we're behind some of our other countries.

Q Mr. President, is it possible to pay them and give them benefits as well, like health benefits, while they're learning?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I think so. What we're going to try to do with this health care plan is to make sure that everybody, whether employed or unemployed, has access to a basic package of comprehensive benefits. Every other country in the world -- advanced country -- does this. Every industrialized country but South Africa does this. Everybody. And yet we spend 30 percent more of our income on health care than anybody else.

Now, if you have access to health care in America it's the best in the world -- and a lot of good things about it. But there are ways to give people a choice of doctors, high quality care, and do it for lower cost if we're willing to take on the insurance cost, if we're willing to take on a lot of the other waste in this system -- the phenomenal waste. The paperwork in the American health care system alone is enough to cover virtually everybody without health insurance.

Do you know -- let me just give you an example. We are hiring -- in most hospitals in America today for the last five years have hired clerical workers at four times the rate of health care givers like nurses, even though there's been a national nursing shortage. Why? Because we're the only country in the world with 1,500 separate health insurance companies writing thousands of different policies, covering small, small groups with a blizzard of rules that would choke a horse. Plus the government makes it worse by the way we run Medicare and Medicaid.

And we're going to try to fix it. It's the most complicated problem I've ever messed with. But if we don't fix it, we can't control the deficit, we can't restore health to the economy, and most important, we can't restore security to the lives of people like those who've asked these questions tonight.

Q Child care and the terrible dilemma that so many working parents have had finding competent child care has obviously been in the news a great deal recently, Mr. President. Hattie Henry lives in a community just north of Atlanta. She is a first-time mother with a six-week-old baby, and you want to go back to your job as a nurse. You're struggling with that dilemma. Is there something that you think that the President can do to help ease this terrible child care crisis out there?

Q That's what I want to know. I'm obviously going to be a working mother and I'm very concerned about the child care crisis, which has finally been thrown into the spotlight with "nannygate." And I would like to know what your first thing is that you're going to do to address the child care issue -- to make it affordable and reasonable.

THE PRESIDENT: Let me ask you -- can you hear me?

MORE

Q Yes, go ahead, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Bill, I'd like to ask your questioner a question first. As you contemplate going back to work, is your biggest concern the cost of child care or the availability of quality care?

Q The quality of the care. The quality of what I can get for the affordability of what I can get -- if it is even worth it to go back to work with what we have available. And what about working mothers who don't have any choice about going back to work? Where can they take their children and have it be affordable and quality care whether they're sure their children are safe and getting good care?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think there are two or three things we can do that we're working on now. First is to work in partnerships with states to help them to develop high standards for child care, but also quality care at affordable prices. And one of the things that we did in my state when I was governor is to spend a good deal bit of our training money. For example, training people who are on welfare, but who were quite intelligent and capable of -- for taking care of their own children -- to work in child care facilities, and moving them from welfare to work in ways that took maximum advantage of money the taxpayers are spending already and lower the cost of child care.

And we often put these child care facilities in and around job training facilities to help working mothers and working parents that were going back to school. Sometimes they were going to school and working at the same time. I think we can do that.

The second thing we can do is to increase the earned income tax credit for working Americans, especially middle to lower middle income working Americans, so that they will have more disposable income to pay their child care expenses.

The third thing we can do is simply to increase the child care credit itself. We basically have got to make the economics of this work. And I think there are lots of other things that can be done, but they won't affect the population as a whole. The population as a whole needs to be helped by making sure you've got a steady stream of trained quality child care workers and then more income for middle-class people, either through the child care tax credit or through the general earned income tax credit, which basically says if you work 40 hours a week and you've got kids in the house, you shouldn't be put into poverty because of your other expenses, including child care. The government ought to reduce your tax burden, if necessary even give you money back as long as you're working hard and playing by the rules and you need to take care of your kids.

MR. BONDS: Mr. President, as long as we're on the subject, let me come in the back door on it and ask you the same question that many Americans apparently have felt, and that is, Judge Kimba Wood certainly did everything she could legally to attain child care. Why was she penalized, punished by being eliminated as a candidate for attorney general if, in fact, she dealt with this rather difficult problem in a perfectly legal way?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, I never selected her to be attorney general. There was a press report that she was, and I regret -- I think she was treated quite unfairly in

this whole thing. I have a high regard for her. But she was one of three or four people I was considering.

Secondly, the facts of her case was that she did not violate the law, because in 1986, the law was changed to say if you knowingly hire an illegal alien, you're violating the law, but if you did it before the law became into effect, you're not violating the law. So a few months before the law was passed, she knowingly hired an illegal alien.

Now, I think -- and she did not do anything illegal. She knew the person providing child care was doing something illegal, but she didn't. But the question there that you can ask or answer that I would have had to answer had I decided to put her up for attorney general is whether the attorney general who runs the Immigration and Naturalization Service has a special standard to meet in this area that other Cabinet members might not have to meet. And that's a question that I would have had to resolve had I decided to nominate her.

One of the things that I think has been very good in this whole business is that we've now taken a lot of these issues out, they're now the subject of public debate, and I hope that we will be able to resolve some of them, including -- you would be amazed how many people who come to my attention as potential candidates for various positions in government honestly did not know that they had to take out withholding on anybody who worked for them if they spent more than \$50 on them every three months. They just didn't know. And that's something that I think has really been raised on the public agenda. I think people are so much more aware of that than they were. You know, some people don't think that ought to be the law, but that's what the law is.

MR. BONDS: Mr. President, a lot of people wonder if, when your wife speaks on health care reform she is speaking directly for you, and if that is the message that you're sending to the American people.

Here's a young woman -- she's 17. She's going to be graduating soon, and, you've got a tough future in front of you.

Q Yes, I do. I suffer from a chronic illness called systemic lupus. And I've already discovered that it will be almost impossible for me to get health care. I'd like to know what you're going to do to insure that people with a preexisting condition can get health care. And also, if the government decides to regulate health insurance and prioritize illnesses, where will long-term, incurable illnesses, such as lupus and cancer and AIDS stand on that list of priorities?

THE PRESIDENT: Let me answer your first question first. The reason so many people with preexisting conditions can't get health insurance is because people are so often insured in very small pools -- like, look around here -- suppose there are only 60 of us -- suppose there are about 60 people in this room. Suppose all of us belong to a group health insurance. And suppose we have the standard array of illnesses and problems, and a couple of us have cancer, and you have lupus and maybe one person has HIV and all the rest of us are healthy as can be, right? It only takes one or two people in a group that small to bankrupt the pool.

But in most countries, and in a few states in America, insurance companies are required to rate people for insurance according to huge community pools with hundreds of thousands of people in them, so that the risk of your care is spread across large numbers of people. And insurance companies

make money the way grocery stores do -- a little bit of money on a lot of people instead of a lot of money on a few people.

So the short answer to your question is, the way to keep preexisting conditions from barring people from getting health insurance is, number one, to make it illegal and, number two, to make it possible for the insurance pools to be big enough so that they don't go broke taking people like you.

The second answer is, I believe, if you look at how much money we're spending on health care, if we can redirect a lot of the money that would be saved from administrative costs and from insurance overcharges per person because of the system we have, if we could do more preventive and primary health care, if we can, in short, maximize the money we're now spending and keep people like you in big pools, I believe there would be enough money to cover your care.

If that is not true, what the government will have to do is to develop a government long-term care program. Because you cannot abandon people who have AIDS or who have prolonged bouts with cancer. In fact, a lot of cancer survivors, as you know, are living now for 10, 15, 20 years, and during most of that time even when there's a recurrence, are serving quite productively. So I think we have to do that.

I just approved, by the way, a strategy to fully fund the Ryan White Act for the care of AIDS patients over the next couple of years, because I think that's an important issue. But we'll never do it -- you won't be treated right until we have a national program that covers everybody.

MR. BONDS: Mr. President, we're going to move into kind of a round-robin here. We're going to throw it now to Seattle.

Q Thank you. I've got two quick questions for you here, Mr. President. The first one is from someone who is nine years old, has never spoken to a President before, but she has written you a letter.

Q Mr. President, how will you help make a drug-free America so I can feel safe walking out on the streets, so that no one's going to come up and ask me, would you like to buy some drugs? (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Good for you. There's no easy answer to your question. One thing I can do is to speak out. Another thing I can do is to hire a person to be our national drug czar, the developer of, the leader of our drug policy, who understands that you have to have a combination of things. You have to have a strong education program in the schools. You have to have a strong program in the communities to keep the streets safe and to protect the children and to give them something to do. And you have to have a strong enforcement program designed to break those people who are bringing drugs into our country in large quantities.

I went to college with a person who's done a lot of very serious prosecution of people involved in and around drug transactions. And he tells me one big mistake we've made, for example, over the years is not to go after people who make big money at it by chasing the money instead of the drugs.

So all I can tell you is that drugs have affected my family. I hate -- I hate what they are doing to America and to children's future. And I'm going to do what I can to fight it through education, through treatment, through opportunities for

safety on the streets, and through trying to go after the people who are really causing the problems.

Who's next, Bill?

MR. BONDS: Well, I have a young man here in the studio, but I think we're going to throw it to Miami -- Ann Bishop, WPLG.

Q Thank you very much, Bill.

Q President Clinton, during the presidential campaign, you severely criticized George Bush's policy on Haitian refugees, but now you're not only carrying that same policy, you also place a naval blockade against Haiti, giving these frightened people no chance to escape. How do you explain these actions, especially at a time when the situation in Haiti is as bad as possible?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, for one thing, the situation in Haiti is getting better. But let me tell you, I explain the action in the following ways: My policy is not the same as President Bush's policy because I'm trying to bring democracy back, because I am committed to putting more resources there to process people who want to be political refugees and can meet the standards and bringing them safely to the United States.

And let me tell you why I did what I did. I did what I did because of the evidence that people in Haiti were taking the wood off the roofs of their houses to make boats that were of questionable safety, to pour in thousands of numbers to come to this country when we knew for sure hundreds of them would die on the high seas coming here and a human tragedy of monumental proportions. And that if they came here, they would all come to south Florida, where the unemployment rate is high, the government is strapped, they don't have any money, and the federal government has constantly broken their commitment to the people of south Florida to help them deal with the immigrant problem.

I decided that the better course was to launch an aggressive effort to restore democracy to Haiti and to launch an aggressive effort to protect people who want to apply to be political refugees in this country in Haiti and to process their applications all over the island, which is what we are doing now.

And I might say, the ultimate proof that my policy is different is that President Aristide himself asked the Haitians to stay home and work with him to restore democracy. And if you noticed, just in the last day, the present rump government in Haiti has agreed to let us send observers there. And I look forward to fully changing the policy and in restoring democracy to Haiti. But I could not in good conscience let hundreds of people die on the high seas and create an enormous problem simply because the United States has not used its muscle to restore democracy to Haiti. That's the problem, and that's the one I'm trying to tackle.

MR. BONDS: But, Mr. President, if you place or slap an embargo on Haiti, you don't hurt the people at the top, you hurt even more severely the people at the bottom.

THE PRESIDENT: The embargo was there all along, and I support it.

MR. BONDS: Yes, but I mean, it gets worse.

MORE

THE PRESIDENT: But if we -- look, if we lift the embargo, I think a lot -- then what incentive does the government have to change? That is an unelected government there. The man who was elected president, everybody down there concedes if he were on the ballot again today would win overwhelmingly. And we have got to try to restore democracy there. I want to lift the embargo very badly. I want to do more than lift the embargo. I want to help rebuild the economy of Haiti. That would be good for America. They could be good partners for us. A lot of the Haitians who are in south Florida would dearly love to go home. But I am not going to lift the embargo as long as there is a government down there oppressing the people.

MR. BONDS: You can't do a town meeting every month, Mr. President, and many people in the White House Press Corps are saying he's going to have to come and answer our questions. You've got about 50 seconds left to answer that question. How are your relationships with the White House Press Corps?

THE PRESIDENT: I think they're all right.

MR. BONDS: They'd like to talk to you.

THE PRESIDENT: I answer their questions just about every day. They come in and ask me questions, and I answer them. We don't see the world the same way.

MR. BONDS: Well, I think the point is -- are there going to be many more of these?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I hope there will be a lot of these.

MR. BONDS: Thanks, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: I hope there will be a lot of these.
(Applause.)

MR. BONDS: Very frankly, time has run out. Time has run out in this evening's town meeting, a night when the people have spoken directly to the President in this country. We'd like to thank our audience here at WXYZ for their participation. We'd like to express our gratitude to the people of KOMO in Seattle and WPLG in Miami, and at station WSB in Atlanta for making this program a nationwide interest and important. And our thanks to President Bill Clinton. I think we all wish you much success, because what happens in the next couple of years is critical to all of us in the nation as well.

Thank you, and good evening. (Applause.)

END

8:57 P.M. EST