

I ask for your help again. The big issue is, should we do all these things: Should we cut spending; should we raise revenues; should we increase investment so that the deficit goes down while investment goes up. This country has never tried to do this before. You've got to be fair to the Members of the United States Congress. We are asking them to do something our country has never tried to do before, which is to hammer the deficit down and increase investment significantly at the same time. But you know where you live, you can see it every day that we have to do both. We have to do both.

And so I say again in closing, I thank you for your endorsement of this program. It made me feel great. I want every Member of the United States House and Senate to know that you not only endorsed it but that you believe in it, not just because of what you get out of it but—

Audience member. What about drugs?

The President. You want to talk? I'll be glad—this program has a lot in it, actually, about drugs. It has a significant increase in funds for drug treatments and gives you, through providing 100,000 more police officers, the power to combat drugs on the street. It does both things. It increases enforcement and treatment, which I would think you would want.

But that makes a good point: Is that spending, or is that an investment? You have to decide. But you have got to give the Congress courage to do this. And you have to help people understand that in this group there were Republicans and Democrats and city people and country people, people from the frost belt and the sun belt and the rust belt and the Bible belt, people

like me that have to get bigger belts every year. [Laughter] You can do that. And if we can do that, we've got a real shot to sit here in honest discussion year in and year out and face these problems.

You know, how many years have you been coming up here and listening to this debate, and it doesn't bear any relationship to the life you live when you go back home? How many, really? I mean, whether it's a discussion about drugs where somebody just talks about getting tough on crime and nobody ever gets down to what they're going to do to help you deal with the problem where you live; or jobs, and somebody rails against taxes and the deficit, and then every year the deficit goes up and so do taxes. Or just how many years have you been coming here listening to these debates when nothing ever changed?

And I just want to tell you, as I said to the Congress, there is plenty of blame to go around; this is not about party. And I don't care who is to blame. I'm prepared to take responsibility. I'm more than willing to face the heat, and if something goes wrong, I'll take responsibility for that and change it. But let's do something, and let's do it now.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:15 p.m. at the Washington Hilton. In his remarks, he referred to Donald M. Fraser, Mayor of Minneapolis, MN, and president of the National League of Cities; Regina Montoya, Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Affairs; and Loretta Avent, Special Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Affairs.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With the Congressional Black Caucus

March 8, 1993

Spending Cuts

Q. Mr. President, do you agree to the extra \$50 billion in cuts that the House and Senate leaders want?

The President. I agree that we will have a budget resolution which will be roughly conforming to the reestimates of the CBO in gen-

eral terms and that will still contain the investment strategy that I want to pursue.

NOTE: The exchange began at 5:11 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.