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Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel of Germany

February 4, 1993

National Service Plan

Q. Mr. President, are you disappointed that you've had to scale back your national service plan? You've scaled it back to a pilot program, and is that a big disappointment to you?

The President. No, I haven't. That article was a complete surprise to me this morning.

Q. How so?

The President. I haven't made any decision to scale it back to a pilot program. I had a meeting just yesterday on national service, and I'm working on funding it just as close to what I recommended in the campaign book, "Putting People First," as possible. We always knew that we would phase it in to some extent in the sense that there would be a limited number of young people in the early years could be in the service programs, and that it would build up over a 6-year period. That's what we proposed all last year. But I'm not at all sure that we're going to cut back much from what we recommended.

Q. So you think it will take 6 years to fully fund it and have every American have an opportunity for a college education?

The President. No, no. I think it will take 6 years before the number of young people who choose the service option as opposed to the repayment option hits its maximum number. That's what we calculated last year in the campaign and what we put out in our book. But unless the mechanics are such that we can't implement the service program, which I don't believe is the case, I would expect us to be well beyond what you would call a pilot program as soon as we implement it. I was surprised by the slant of the Post story this morning, because I think we'll do more than that.

Bosnia

Q. —positive to say about the Bosnian peace plan that has been offered?

The President. Yes, I think that anything, any effort that increases the chance of some ultimately peaceful solution is important. But I think the United States has under review now all of its options in that area. And I think at this time the position that the Secretary of State has taken is the one that we have agreed on and the one that I think is proper.

Q. Are you close to an announcement, though?

Q. When will you have something more to say about that, Mr. President?

Q. *Sprechen Sie deutsch*, Mr. President?

Q. Are you practicing your German?

The President. I haven't been conversational in 24 years. Maybe I can brush up on it.

Q. Can you read it?

The President. Yes, I can still read pretty well.

Foreign Minister Kinkel. Do you know our country?

The President. Yes, I've been there several times. I took 3 years in German. And I was in Germany in '69 and '70, and I've been back a few times since. And then I was in Baden-Baden in 1991 at—meeting for several days. The meeting was 3 or 4 days, I would guess.

Foreign Minister Kinkel. —speak German?

The President. A little, yes. I haven't spoken it, literally, in 24 years. But when I was in the country, I heard the people talking, and usually I know a lot of what they're saying.

Foreign Minister Kinkel. You can read a newspaper, perhaps?

The President. I can read quite a bit of the newspaper. I ran—I was in—where was I—in the English gardens in Munich. I ran in a 10K race there a couple of years ago when I was over there on a trade mission. And they wrote it up in the newspaper. And someone sent me the article, and I read the whole article. I could read that. So I can read a little bit. And my daughter goes to German camp every summer.

Foreign Minister Kinkel. Yes, I read it in my paper. This is important because these

are my press people from Germany. And they are interested especially in this, your relations to our country.

The President. Oh, I've been there many times. I first went in '69, and I've been going a lot since then. And my daughter, as I said, goes to this German village in Minnesota, language camp, every year now for 5 years.

Foreign Minister Kinkel. And she speaks our language?

The President. Well, a little bit. You know, it's a children's camp. They send the kids to the camp, and the camp is built like a German village. And they give them German names, German money, a German passport, and they have to speak conversational German.

But next year, when she moves into high school, she will go for a month and begin an academic study. And then she will get, and each year she goes for the next 4 years, a year's academic credit for studying it. So by the time she finishes in high school she should be pretty close to conversational.

NOTE: The exchange began at 4:20 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Dinner Honoring the New Jersey Congressional Delegation

February 4, 1993

Good evening. Thank you. I know we're not really, but it feels like it's nice to be back in New Jersey. And I'm glad to have you here in the Nation's Capital. You may or may not be able to see this, but on the way in tonight, Bill Faherty gave me a New Jersey tie, which I have proudly donned. They even had a mirror outside for me to be able to tie it in a straight and appropriate fashion. *[Laughter]*

I want to tell you how very glad I am to be here tonight with the State chamber, how much I want to welcome you to our Nation's Capital. I've just been here as President 2 weeks and a day, and I'm already hoping we can keep an infusion of people from the heartland coming in to keep us in touch with reality.

I'm glad to see all the Members of the House here. Senator Bradley and Senator Lautenberg are voting tonight as the United States Senate attempts to work out the family leave bill. I do want to say a special word of appreciation to both of them in front of their constituents for not only the support they have given me but for the genuinely good advice across a whole wide range of issues.

I have the sort of relationship with them which I really respect and which I hope the Members of Congress here will take to heart. Either one of them is liable to call me at any time of the day or night from places unknown. Always all right places, but—*[laughter]*—I mean, when they're around, you know. And I'm very, very grateful to both of them not only for their support in the recent election but for their involvement in the great issues of this time.

I've been working hard for the last 2 weeks to try to be worthy of the trust of the voters of this country who gave me a chance to become President, including the people of New Jersey who voted for a Democrat for the first time in 28 years. I know you haven't always been able to tell it from the news, but I spent virtually all of my time working on the economy, the jobs issue, the deficit, meeting in long periods with my staff, with people from around the country who know about these matters, with Members of the United States Congress, working with people in both parties to try to end the gridlock and to reach agreement so that we can move forward.

We've had, as all of you know now, an economic upturn in the last few months, and we hope that we are coming out firmly of the longest recession we've had in a good long while. There is much to be encouraged about in two or three areas. First of all, interest rates have been down for a good long while now, and millions of Americans have refinanced their homes or been able to buy new homes in ways that have generated significant economic activity. Second, and even more encouraging over the long run, there has been a big increase in the productivity of American businesses and workplaces. That is, after all, the key to our economic future.