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cit. A lot of people think that was not very helpful when you're trying to cooperate with Asian countries. I was wondering, after this meeting——

The President. Wait, wait, wait. You can ask the question, but let me restate what I said.

What I said to the American people was simply the fact that the people who were against NAFTA acted as if Mexico essentially was going to displace the entire industrial production of the United States or significant portions of it. And I pointed out the fact that we have a trade surplus with Mexico and that our largest operating trade deficits are with Japan, China, and Taiwan. That's simply a fact. That's not an act of hostility, it's just a stated fact. So, go ahead, ask the question.

Q. The question is, after this meeting, will you think that in the future that United States is willing to use cooperation instead of Article 301 type of trade retaliation threat to deal with these problems?

The President. Well, I think, first of all, we've used Article 301 rather sparingly. And secondly, we do seek cooperation. That's the whole purpose of this meeting. That's one of the reasons that I wanted all the leaders to come here, because I think that we have so much in common in terms of our shared views about what the economy of the 21st century ought to look like and what our roles ought to be in it, that I think we can do a lot through cooperation. And we're working very hard to do that.

In the end, if we're going to develop the right kind of free market system, it is going to have to be a cooperative one. But it's going to have to be one that is plainly in the interest of all the people involved in the system. That is, everyone has to be going forward together.

Multilateral Trade Negotiations

Q. Mr. President, how hard and fast is the December 15th deadline for successful completion of the GATT round? It's slipped a couple of times previously. Would you be prepared to extend it if you don't have agreement by then?

The President. Well, it's not entirely up to me, and of course, we have certain legislative authority in America, as you know, that controls that.

All I can tell you is that I think we want to take this moment of opportunity that, frankly, the House of Representatives, and I hope today that the Senate, will give impetus to through NAFTA, and that we are trying to give energy to through our meeting here and through our clear statement again that we want the Asian-Pacific region to be united, not divided, economically; open, not closed; and committed to GATT. We want to seize this moment to try to get it done now. And I've always found that when you're working on an objective, you shouldn't discuss what you'll do if you don't get there until after you don't get there. We still think we can be there, and we're going to try.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:45 p.m. on Blake Island. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad of Malaysia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Luncheon With APEC Leaders in Seattle

November 20, 1993

Deficit Reduction Proposal

The President. Ladies and gentlemen, as you know I'm supposed to be hosting a lunch in there, so I can't stay long. But there's one thing going on back in Washington I wanted to comment on today, and that is the debate over further budget reduction measures and specifically the Penny-Kasich amendment. I want to make a couple of points.

First of all, we have not only passed the biggest deficit reduction program in history, which has produced very low interest rates and stable growth, we have presented the Congress with another package of cuts that includes a procurement reform bill that could save us up to $20 billion. I have started the process of appointing

an entitlement commission which could look at the entitlements of this country where the real growth in Federal spending is. We are going to offer an amendment which will strengthen our own budget reduction measure to take it up to $30 billion. And that's what I think we ought to do, we ought to focus on those things.

The Penny-Kasich amendment has a number of problems, but let me just emphasize two. First of all, it clearly would take cuts in Medicare and Medicaid that we have allocated for health care reform in a way that would make national health reform impossible this year. It would take away the possibility of getting a comprehensive national health reform bill. And secondly, it would run the risk of having further cuts in the defense budget that, in my judgment, has already been cut certainly as much as it possibly can be, if not a little beyond.

So because it would cut defense and because it would remove the possibility of health care reform and because we have gotten interest rates down very low with what we have already done and there is an alternative the Congress can embrace—the further cuts we've recommended, the procurement reform, and the entitlement commission—I hope that that amendment will be defeated and that our approach will be embraced. I think it is a far more disciplined approach, far more likely to produce good economic results and to leave open the possibility of health care reform and to be far more responsible in terms of national defense. So that's what I hope will happen today.

Handgun Control Legislation

Q. Mr. President, in addition, back in Washington there's also been—[*inaudible*]—on the Brady bill. Could you tell us what is your understanding of where the Brady bill stands this evening? And would you be willing to accept the compromise, the latest compromise that's put forth by the Republicans?

The President. Well, I'm having an analysis sent to me. I think that the Republicans must be very uncomfortable with having once again thwarted the will of the majority of the Senate and now over 80 percent of the American people. Actually, I'm just surprised. So I want to see what changes they want to make. I'm not for watering down the Brady bill. The Brady bill is important. Perhaps they have some change that is procedural that from their point of view makes it less onerous, that doesn't change the substance of it. But I would want to see it and have a chance to have it evaluated before I made any comment.

I think that the American people would think a lot more of the Congress if the Brady bill passed both Houses before they left. I am genuinely surprised. I can't believe that the Republicans in the Senate really want to filibuster this bill to death. I think that surely that won't happen. So we'll just have to wait and see.

Q. So you don't think it's dead?

The President. Oh, no, no. Not dead for this session, this session meaning early next year, too? You mean between now and when they go out? I think it depends on when they go out and what else can be offered. They may be prepared to hold up the bill over Christmas until early next year. I don't know. I'm surprised by this. I have to say I am surprised. I thought after the bill passed the House, especially by such a healthy margin, that the majority rule would prevail in the Senate. And we'll just have to see. We've still got a few hours, and let's just see whether something can be broken. We're working on it.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:10 p.m. on Blake Island.

Exchange With Reporters Following Discussions With APEC Leaders in Seattle

November 20, 1993

Q. Mr. Clinton, are you pleased at the outcome of today's meeting?

The President. Yes, and we agreed to meet again next year in Indonesia.

Q. When you look back on this how will you——