

it's regrettable, but understandable, that the supporters did not want to comply with the right-to-know suggestion. But they're going to have to, anyway. They're going to have to before the States vote on it. They're going to have to tell people what the consequences are.

Q. Is there anything they could change to make you go along with it with this point of view that it's such a bad idea to change the Constitution?

The President. I think that changing—I think if you change the Constitution without some sort of an economic emergency—that's my problem. That is, my problem is, if you read Senator Moynihan's three lectures on this, three speeches in the Senate, he did a wonderful job, Moynihan did, of laying out the whole history of our budgeting and pointing out how this problem that we're saddled with is a new problem in American history. It arose from 1981 to 1993. It did not exist before in our country. And the point he made is, we can fix it without amending the Constitution if we have the will to do it and if we'll work together in a bipartisan fashion.

And if we amend the Constitution and we fix it, then the next time it takes effect, it'll be destructive, because we'll be in a recession and it will make the recession worse. That's what I'm worried about. I don't know how they could fix that. I understand one of the Senators had some sort of an economic emergency

amendment that would fix that. But that's what I see as the real problem.

You know, I guess when you come down to it, the best argument for it is the drunk in the liquor store argument: Every time I drive by, I'm going to go in and buy a fifth; you better board it up. I mean, near as I can tell, that's the argument for it. And I just think that we should have a bipartisan determination to keep bringing that rascal down without amending the Constitution in ways that 10, 15 years from now are likely to hurt our children and our grandchildren.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:32 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of the Treasury Robert Rubin; Jerry Lovitt, Kentucky State police commissioner; former White House Press Secretary James Brady, who was wounded in the 1981 assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan; and Mr. Brady's wife, Sarah, head of Hand Gun Control, Inc. Public Law 103-159, "To provide for a waiting period before the purchase of a handgun, and for the establishment of a national instant criminal background check system to be contacted by firearms dealers before the transfer of any firearm," approved November 30, 1993, took effect on February 28, 1994.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Wim Kok of The Netherlands

February 28, 1995

Iran

Q. Mr. President, are you concerned about Iran placing anti-aircraft missiles at the mouth of the Persian Gulf?

The President. I think that I'll wait until later to answer any questions.

Q. Even the ones—the Republicans saying that they're willing to change the balanced budget amendment so that the courts cannot raise taxes or cut spending?

The Netherlands

Q. And about The Netherlands—[laughter]—

The President. It's a great country and a great ally of the United States.

[At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.]

"Apache" Helicopters

Q. Mr. President, how will you react if the Dutch Government decides not to buy Apache helicopters?

The President. Well, that's a decision for the Dutch Government to make. Obviously, I hope that that will be the decision because I think on the merits, it's the best product. But that's a decision that the Government has to make.

Q. Mr. President, are you trying to sell the Prime Minister on the benefits of the Apache helicopter?

The President. I've already done that. I've already made my pitch, if you will.

Prime Minister Kok. And Mr. President, if we don't buy them, we remain a great country.

The President. That's right. We have—you know, our relationship with the Dutch, it's a very—it's a deep and broad and complex one. There are a lot of things involved in it, and this is just one part of it. We are allies in every sense of the word, in so many ways. And we have to continue to work together. There are a lot of problems in Europe and beyond that require our cooperation and our mutual support. And of course, we have a terrific commercial relationship as well. So we have a lot riding on this relationship, and no single element of it can be allowed to define it.

United Nations Peacekeeping

Q. [Inaudible]—about U.N. peacekeeping forces that may be in jeopardy because of the attitude of the Republican Party?

The President. Well, I don't agree with the attitude of the party with regard to the peacekeeping forces in Bosnia and with regard to at least some of what I've seen in the House of Representatives on peacekeeping generally. I believe the United States should participate in peacekeeping. I think we should pay our way. I think we should continue to be a strong force there.

With regard to Bosnia, I think we should—the United States should support the Contact Group and should support those countries that do have their soldiers on the ground and at risk there. And we have said, for example, if we had to withdraw, if UNPROFOR collapsed, we would try to do our part to help people get out of Bosnia safely. But I think it would be a mistake for the United States to go off on its own and start making independent Bosnia policy. We don't have our soldiers there. The Europeans do have soldiers there; the Canadians have soldiers there. They have put their lives at risk. We have spent a lot of money in Bosnia, and we have supported from air and sea and from our hospital in Croatia, and a lot of other ways we've supported the operation of the U.N. in Bosnia.

Q. So you're with our Prime Minister and against the Republicans in this matter?

The President. That's correct. That's essentially—

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. [Inaudible]—Constitution—

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. There has to be a difference of opinion in the United States or you're on the long end of it—you're in the right position. [Laughter]

NOTE: The exchange began at 10:27 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Wim Kok of The Netherlands

February 28, 1995

The President. Please be seated. Welcome. It's indeed a pleasure to welcome Prime Minister Kok to the White House. Since the days of our Revolutionary War when The Netherlands gave shelter to John Paul Jones' ships, The Netherlands has consistently been one of our most valued and trusted allies.

I also have warm personal recognition, Mr. Prime Minister, of your country. I last visited it a few years ago when I was Governor of Arkansas, and I hope I have a chance to visit

it again. In the meanwhile, I'm glad we had the opportunity to return the hospitality today.

The Prime Minister comes here at a very important time, when we are seeking to work together to meet the challenges of the post-cold-war era. One of the most vital issues we discussed is the effort to build a more integrated, more secure Europe, to ensure that democracy and prosperity grow strong in the years ahead. We reaffirmed our intention to press