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The President. I think you should wait until the—I think, first of all, the American people should be very proud of the work done by the law enforcement authorities. They worked hard together. They worked aggressively. They worked without stopping until they made, I think, a very quick arrest. But I'd like for you to wait until the proper authorities have a chance to make their statement to you later this afternoon. And then tomorrow I will have a chance to make some more comments on it.

Q. Can we assume that it's terrorism?

The President. I don't think you should assume anything until you hear the statement today. I know that an arrest was made. I know who was arrested. I think that at the time I was informed this morning there were a lot of other questions we did not know the answers to. And they're trying to get as much information together as possible to give you later this afternoon.

NOTE: The presentation began at 3:07 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Exchange With Reporters During a Meeting With Students From Tilden Middle School

March 4, 1993

Health Care Task Force

Q. Mr. President, can you explain to us why your health care task force won't be open to the public?

The President. No working group of the Government before they have a proposal—that would be like opening the White House at every staff meeting we have. We can't do that. I mean, they've got 400 people over there, working continuously on thousands of different issues. Nobody ever does that. We would never—we can't get anything done.

Also, what we've done has been publicly reported. Most of the papers have been released or leaked. But they have to be able to work. It's an ongoing project. It's like any other staffer at the White House does.

Q. But how do we know that there is no conflict of interest since we don't know who is working on it and we can't attend any of the meetings, the public meetings?

The President. It's just like any other—how do you know that about anything we do here at the White House?

World Trade Center Bombing

Q. Can you be any more reassuring on the whole terrorism question, sir? This is obviously what people are going to be most worried about.

The President. I think people should be very reassured by the incredibly rapid work done by the law enforcement officials involved. It is very impressive. All resources were put into this from the moment the explosion occurred, and I think they did a remarkable job. I don't think I should say more than I know now. And I think you should wait until the statement is made tonight by the appropriate officials, and I'll be glad to give you further comments. But I think the American people should be very much reassured by the speed with which the law enforcement folks responded in this circumstance.

NOTE: The exchange began at 3:25 p.m. in the North Foyer at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks on Signing the Emergency Unemployment Compensation Amendments of 1993 and an Exchange With Reporters

March 4, 1993

The President. I want to, first of all, acknowledge the presence here of Senators Mitchell, Moynihan, Riegle, Sarbanes, Sasser, Hatfield, and Durenberger; the Speaker and Congressman Matsui and Congressman Fish. I would also like to acknowledge the Labor Secretary and two of his employees, whom I will recognize formally in just a moment.

Today I am signing important legislation to extend unemployment benefits long term. I want to thank the Congress for passing this bill, which is the first provision in the eco-

nomic package I recommended to them in my joint address.

The bill reforms existing law. It symbolizes the success of a new management style we are bringing to the Government. And it reminds us of how critical it is to adopt the rest of our economic plan, to increase investment, reduce the deficit, create private-sector jobs, and increase the incomes of working Americans.

We have extended unemployment benefits. Now it's time to extend jobs. It's been less than a month since I asked the Secretary of Labor to prepare the emergency legislation. I want to commend the leadership of the Congress, of those who are here and those who are not, who made rapid action possible. Thanks to them, the benefits of millions of Americans will proceed without interruption. More important, this legislation takes an existing pilot program and applies it nationally in ways that I am convinced will help tens of thousands of workers immediately.

This reform was brought to the attention of Secretary Reich by line workers at the Department of Labor, and it reflects the kind of innovation and imagination we must bring to the entire Federal Government. It is at the core of the national performance review initiative that the Vice President and I announced yesterday.

The Department of Labor funds a demonstration project in New Jersey that matches up workers who are permanently displaced with training and reemployment services. They use existing data to provide services to people in need. Once they're identified, the workers receive the kind of counseling, training, and retraining that gets them back to work faster and often at higher wages than would have otherwise been the case.

Secretary of Labor Reich held a town meeting in his Department of Labor to break down the walls that too often have existed between senior management and Federal employees. Because two dedicated public employees brought this successful innovation to his attention, today it is becoming the law of the land everywhere, thanks to the Congress. It's a great example of what we can and must do throughout the Government.

And the people who made it happen have joined us here for this important moment. With this bill becoming law, 1½ million unemployed Americans who need help making the rent and buying groceries and paying for school clothes will receive it. I hope they will also recognize the efforts of the two gentlemen to my left with the Secretary of Labor, Steve Wandner and Steve Marler, the Labor Department employees who brought the profiling reform to the Secretary's attention. Thank you very much.

Some of the indicators are that we are coming out of a long and deep recession. But, as all of you know, this has been a slow, anemic recovery when it comes to job growth especially. It is time now to get on to the important work of stimulating our economy and putting the American people back to work, to creating the conditions that will allow the private sector to create jobs, and to create jobs at good wages. I hope that this is a good first step.

There are those who say we don't need to do anything else to our economy, but I would remind you all that we are 3 million jobs behind where we would be at this point in an ordinary American recovery. Claims for unemployment benefits are up again this week, and there are still deep structural changes going on in this economy as well as a recession in Europe and a very difficult economic problem in Japan, all of these things affecting our future prospects. I think we can grow our economy, and we can create jobs. But we have to be committed, as I said, to a long-term program to create jobs and raise incomes. That is what our economic plan seeks to do.

As I said, we're now extending unemployment benefits, and that's a good thing to do. We are recognizing the fact that more and more Americans who lose their jobs now don't expect to go back to those old jobs. There's been a stunning increase in the number of people who say when they lose their jobs today, I don't expect to get this job back. And the reform brought to our attention by these two fine gentlemen will help us to help those people. But in the end, what we have to do is to extend jobs and not unemployment. That is our next great test, and I think we're off to a good beginning today.

[*At this point, the President signed the bill.*]

Bosnia

Q. Mr. President, do you have any response to Mr. Karadzic, who had an implied threat of violence against the United States because of its policy of airdrops?

The President. Well, if that's what he meant to do, he made a terrible mistake, and it was something that I viewed with grave concern and real disapproval.

World Trade Center Bombing

Q. Do you think that the incident in New York and the arrest today should make Americans afraid about foreign policy decisions that might affect us domestically through terrorism?

The President. No, I don't think the American people can afford to be afraid. I think we all have to be concerned about any risks to our people's safety. But I would say again what I said to you earlier: My feeling now is one of real gratitude to the law enforcement officials at every level who worked together and moved quickly to try to resolve this matter and who did make an arrest.

I think we should wait until the formal statement is issued, until we know more facts before we can draw any conclusions about anything other than the fact that an arrest was undertaken. When I know more facts I'll be glad to answer more questions and say more. But I think that today we ought to be very impressed that the law enforcement authorities in this country moved so quickly to make an arrest. And I'm grateful to them.

Q. Why would it be a grave mistake for him to make implications?

Q. Based on what you know, sir, do you think they'll be able to crack the bombing case?

The Deficit

Q. What does this say about your commitment to cutting the deficit?

The President. It says I've done more about it than anybody in recent history. And I intend to keep on.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:33 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. H.R. 920, approved March 4, was assigned Public Law No. 103–6.

Statement on Signing the Emergency Unemployment Compensation Amendments of 1993

March 4, 1993

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 920, the "Emergency Unemployment Compensation Amendments of 1993." This legislation will provide critical assistance to the unemployed and their families by extending the Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) program—which is scheduled to expire March 6—through October 2, 1993. In addition, the legislation includes an innovative worker profiling program to encourage States to use the Unemployment Insurance system to link permanently displaced workers to reemployment services early in their period of unemployment and facilitate their transition to new jobs.

With the EUC program due to expire this Saturday, I commend the Congress for its swift action to ensure that there will be continued help for millions of jobless Americans who want to work to support their families but cannot find jobs. I believe that, as a Nation, we have a moral obligation, as well as an economic interest, to help these families stay afloat while they attempt to find jobs.

While there have been recent signs of improvement in the economy, this improvement has regrettably not extended to the area of employment. The unemployment rate has been over 7 percent for 14 consecutive months and the current rate is higher than the rate that existed when the EUC program was originally enacted. Moreover, the current labor market is, in many respects, weaker than it was at what was considered the worst point of the recession. For example, the rates at which the unemployed are now exhausting their regular State benefits and the average length of time the unemployed are now receiving benefits are significantly higher than they were at the bottom of the recession.

H.R. 920 combines compassion with a healthy dose of common sense. It not only