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clear long-term goals of strengthening our economy, growing our middle class, shrinking our under class, keeping America the world's greatest home for entrepreneurs. If it's consistent with our values and our economic interests, that's what we ought to do. We can't do that if we destroy the public responsibility in these critical areas.

I, however, have to tell you I am basically optimistic, maybe because I am genetically programmed that way. [*Laughter*] We are going through sort of a tortured version of a scientific method now. It reminds me—I say tortured because, unlike the scientific method, it ignores the experiments of the past. [*Laughter*] But still, it's sort of like that.

And I'm reminded of what Winston Churchill said about the United States when we were trying to decide in the Congress whether to support the Lend-Lease Act and help Britain when Britain was alone in World War II. And there was a great question about whether President Roosevelt could pass the Lend-Lease Act through Congress because many thought it was a backdoor way of getting the United States into the war. And Mr. Churchill said, ''I have great confidence in the judgment and the common sense of the American people and their leaders. They invariably do the right thing, after they have considered every other alternative.'' [*Laughter*]

So I urge you to inject some rigor into this scientific experimentation. I thank you for your achievements and your contributions. I do believe that the 21st century can be a golden age for all Americans and that we can help to lead the world to a new era of freedom and peace and prosperity—if we make the right decisions in this critical time of change.

Your very achievements, the example of your life work have increased the odds that we will do exactly that. And on behalf of all Americans, I thank you and congratulate you.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:54 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

The President's News Conference

October 19, 1995

The President. Good morning. The Congress is about to take some votes that I believe will move this country in the wrong direction. Before they do it, I want to urge them to think again. There's a right way to balance this budget and a wrong way. I strongly believe the Republicans in Congress are taking the wrong way.

On Medicare, the House is voting on a $270 billion cut in Medicare that will eviscerate the health care system for our older Americans. It goes far beyond what is necessary to secure the Medicare Trust Fund. Our plan to secure the Medicare Trust Fund secures it for just as long as the Republican plan at less than half the cost and with far less burden on our seniors.

The House plan, by contrast, actually weakens existing law on waste, fraud, and abuse in the Medicare program, which is a serious problem. And therefore, it will undermine our efforts to save funds through cracking down on waste, fraud, and abuse, as the Attorney General has outlined. On the other hand, it increases costs on older Americans dramatically. That is the wrong way.

So my message to the Republicans is simple: I hope you will think again; I will not let you destroy Medicare; and I will veto this bill. I have to do that to protect the people of the United States and to protect the integrity of this program.

On taxes, just last night we learned from the Republicans' own Joint Committee on Taxation that more than half of the American people who live in the group earning under $30,000 will pay more taxes if the Republican economic plan passes. Why? Because they have a $43-billion tax hike targeted at working families. Now this doesn't count the cost to working families of the increases in college loans, the child support collection fees, the Medicare increases, the Medicaid increases, all told, over $140 billion of taxes, fees, and other increases on the most vulnerable people in our country and on working families.

So again, I would say, think again. I won't let you raise taxes on working families $48

billion. That is not the right way to balance the budget. It isn't fair, and it won't happen. These bills undermine our values, our values of supporting both work and family, our values of being responsible and creating opportunity. They are not necessary to balance the budget.

Meanwhile, Congress is lagging behind on its other business. For the budget this year—the fiscal year, as all of you know, ended 3 weeks ago, and they have still sent me only 3 of the 13 appropriations bills. Last year, all 13 were here and signed into law by the beginning of the fiscal year.

It's been 6 months since the Oklahoma City bombing killed 169 of our fellow Americans and 6 months since congressional leaders promised that they would pass the antiterrorism legislation by Memorial Day. They still haven't passed the bill. They haven't even scheduled it for a final vote. I might add also, one of the important items in their contract which I did support, the line-item veto, has still not been passed by the Congress and sent to me. And perhaps most troubling of all, because they refuse to extend the debt limit, they are threatening to plunge our country into default for the first time in the entire history of the Republic. This would, of course, mean higher interest rates, which would increase the deficit we both want to reduce, and it would also lead to higher home mortgage costs for millions of homeowners whose mortgages are tied to Federal interest rates.

I was told this morning by the Council of Economic Advisers probably somewhere between 7 and 10 million homeowners have mortgages that are tied to Federal interest rates. So again, my message to Congress on this issue is simple: We must not play political games with the good faith and credit of the United States. Pass the debt limit, and I will sign it.

It's time for Congress to turn back from passing extreme measures that never will become law and instead to work with me for the American people to balance this budget in a way that advances our values and supports our interests. That is what we ought to do. We can still do that, it is what I still believe we will do.

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Now, I can only imagine what the first question is. [*Laughter*] Wait a minute, let me just say one thing. Before you ask this question, I want to say something about my speech—well, the two speeches I gave in which I made reference to the economic plan of 1993. If anything I said was interpreted by anybody to imply that I am not proud of that program, proud of the people who voted for it, or that I don't believe it was the right thing to do, then I shouldn't have said that, because I am very proud of it. I think it was absolutely the right thing to do. I am proud of the people in Congress who voted for it. And the results speak for themselves. After all, that program actually did reduce the deficit by $1 trillion over 7 years. That program drove down interest rates. That program created an economic climate in which the American people were able to produce 7½ million new jobs, 2½ million new homeowners, a record number of new businesses, and put this country moving in the right direction.

So if I said anything which can be read in any other way, then I should not have said that. And I certainly did not mean to do that, and I accept responsibility for it, because I am very, very proud of what I did. And I have tried to make that clear in every talk I have made this year, and I reaffirm it to you here today—all of the parts of the program. We did the right thing for America, and I'm proud of it today, and I'm proud of the people who voted for it.

Q. Mr. President, did you mean to say what you said, that you regret having raised taxes as much as you did?

The President. What I said was—what I meant to say is, I think nobody enjoys raising taxes. I think our system works better when Democrats and Republicans work together to reach consensus, and I think it would work better now if we did. That's what I meant to say.

But I do not believe that when we had the decision to make and we had the vote to cast, I take full responsibility, proudly, for what we did. It was the right thing to do. I believe all the people who have heard me talk about it knew what I meant to say, and I'm proud of the Congress for voting for it. And if we hadn't done it, we'd really be in

a fix today. And I might say, the Republicans who criticize us obviously think we did the right thing since they're not trying to undo much of it at all.

Q. But did you raise taxes too much?

Medicare Legislation

Q. Mr. President, you said that you'd veto the Republican Medicare bill for $270 billion worth of cuts. Your own Medicare bill is $124 billion in cuts. Where do you see a compromise between the two? How far are you willing to go?

The President. Well, first of all, I think we have to draw a—I am willing to do what they want to do, which is to extend the life of the Medicare Trust Fund to 2006. That's what we both do. Now beyond that, I don't believe we ought to be raising costs on the elderly poor through the Medicare program and the far worse things that are in the Medicaid program. You know, the Medicaid program supplies the copays and the deductible for very poor elderly people, and they propose to stop doing that.

It's estimated we could lose a million seniors out of the Medicare program, and I just don't think we need to do that. We can balance the budget with the cuts that I have proposed, and that's what I think we ought to do. I believe that they are more than adequate to balance the budget and to secure the Medicare Trust Fund without really burning our seniors.

Helen [Helen Thomas, United Press International].

Bosnia

Q. Mr. President, slight change of subject. Would you send peacekeeping troops to Bosnia if we do not get congressional approval? And you have never stated that you would only keep them for one year. Your people have and the Cabinet has, but is that a flat commitment?

The President. Let me answer the question carefully. The reason I have never said that is that I wanted to define our mission and have the mission be defined in the way that we did in Haiti. We defined our mission in Haiti, and we said, okay, this is when we think we will complete our mission, and we did it. And then we said the United Nations would complete its mission with the next Presidential election, which occurs early next year.

In Bosnia, I wanted to make sure that we had a clear notion of what our mission was. Yesterday, General Joulwan, who is our NATO Commander, came in with the national security team, and we had a very extended session about the plans that are now being developed, which, of course, cannot be finalized until we get a peace agreement, because the nature of the map and the nature of the agreement among the parties will determine in part the nature of the commitments that the United Nations and that NATO will have to make.

But our commanders believe we can complete our mission in a year. That's what they believe. Before I make that pledge to the American people, I want to know what the peace agreement is finally, and I want to have a very high level of confidence that I can make that commitment and keep it. But it looks like we're talking about a commitment in the nature—in the range of a year.

Q. Wait a minute. Would you go ahead, then, and send the troops, even if Congress does not approve?

The President. I am not going to lay down any of my constitutional prerogatives here today. I have said before and I will say again, I would welcome and I hope I get an expression of congressional support. I think it's important for the United States to be united in doing this. I believe that we had a very good meeting with the Speaker and Senator Dole and a large number of Congressmen, as you know, a couple of weeks ago. I expect that our people will be asked and will have to answer difficult questions; that's the job of the Congress. But I believe in the end, the Congress will support this operation.

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Q. Mr. President, may we take it—just a final followup on this—may we take it from what you said here today that what you meant to say on taxes was that while you raised them more than you would have liked to, that it was perhaps a mistake to say you raised them too much?

The President. If I said anything which implies that I think that we didn't do what

we should have done, given the choices we faced at the time, I shouldn't have said that.

My mother once said I should never give a talk after 7 p.m. at night, especially if I'm tired, and she sure turned out to be right is all I can say. [*Laughter*]

Bosnia

Q. Mr. President, back on the subject of the deployment in Bosnia, many experts feel that by the very nature of a deployment, American troops would become targets for various groups who want to disrupt the situation. How do you prevent that? And having committed troops to Europe twice in this century because they got into a mess they couldn't resolve, why does the United States have to continue to come to Europe's rescue?

The President. Because now what we're trying to do is to avoid just what drug us into Europe. If you remember, I said we would not go into a situation in which we'd be in combat in Bosnia on one side of the conflict, nor would we be engaged with the United Nations mission because of the rules of engagement there, but that if we can make a peace, since NATO would have to be involved in implementing the peace agreement and assuring its success and we are the leaders of NATO, we would have to go into it. The reason we need to do this is to—precisely to avoid the kind of convulsive conflict with massive consequences that drug us into Europe twice before and got huge numbers of Americans killed in the defense of freedom and decency. I strongly believe we can do that.

Now one of the things we are concerned about, obviously, is that if a peace is made, even in good faith, there may be people who don't like the peace. And we don't want—not only the United States but any of the NATO soldiers or any of our allies not in NATO who will be taking part in this, and we expect a significant number of non-NATO members to contribute—we don't want anybody to be targets, and we've given quite a bit of thought to that. And as this plan proceeds, we'll see what happens.

Let me just emphasize—first of all, first things first: The leaders of the three countries have agreed to come here to the United States to meet in Ohio at the end of this month. We are very pleased by that, and that is the next big step. The most important thing, the thing that will reduce danger to everybody, is if these leaders will agree to an honorable peace and then do everything they can in good faith to keep it.

I must tell you, I'm somewhat encouraged by the fact that the cease-fire seems to be taking hold. The incidents seem to be dropping throughout Bosnia. There seems to be an atmosphere of mutual commitment taking hold there, and we obviously hope that can be sustained.

Budget Negotiations

Q. Mr. President, yesterday you said you were perhaps genetically optimistic by nature that there would in the end be a deal when all is said and done. But Speaker Gingrich keeps saying he's willing to cooperate, but he's not willing to compromise on his bottom line in the tax cut, the Medicare cuts, and all these other issues. Why are you optimistic that there still will be a deal?

The President. Because this is America and people usually do the right thing, and because we've been around here for a long, long time. Now, I know that at least in reading between the lines, it appears that the extreme conservative wing in the House continues to move the Speaker back and affect what happens in the Senate and make the possibility of honorable compromise more remote. But I believe in the end, that's the right thing for the country.

My goal—I will say again, and what I try to capture from time to time, sometimes not too well, as we see, is that if you have two people who both make a good-faith effort at reaching a common stated goal, the balanced budget in this case, and they have different approaches, if they get together in genuine honesty and openness—I think there's a way for me to meet their stated objectives, which is a balanced budget in 7 years with a family tax cut, and I think they want a capital gains tax cut and extending the Medicare Trust Fund until 2006, and for them to meet our stated goals, which is to maintain our commitments to our investments in education and our obligations to the elderly through the Medicare program and to the elderly and our children, the disabled people in America

through the Medicaid program, and our obligations to the environment and to technology and to the things that will make our economy grow—we can both meet our objectives. And if we do it in good faith, we might wind up with a budget that is better than either one of us proposed. That's what I hope will happen, and I'm going to leave the door open for that. But meanwhile, my job is to protect the American people if something happens that I think is very wrong. And I think the Medicare budget is wrong for America.

Presidential Commission on Race

Q. Mr. President, the University of Texas speech included several challenges on race to blacks and whites, alike. How do you plan to further the conversation? Are there any next steps? What are your thoughts about a Presidential commission on race?

The President. Well, as you know, I received a letter signed by a number of House Members asking for that. And I have that and a number of other ideas under consideration. After I spoke at the University of Texas, and after so many came here to Washington in that march in what I thought was such a profoundly moving spirit, an open spirit and is clearly a manifestation of a desire to assume more responsibilities for themselves, for their families, their communities, and to reach out to the white community and their fellow Americans and to try to figure out how we can work together, I think that there is a big responsibility on me and on others to carry forward with that. And as you know, in the last few days I've been quite active with previously scheduled events. But we are turning our attention now very carefully to what should be done to follow up. I think we owe the country a followup, and I'm going to do my best to do it right.

I'll take one more question. Mara [Mara Liasson, National Public Radio].

Budget Negotiations

Q. Mr. President, just to follow up. This, I believe, is the first time you've said that you think you can reach a balanced budget in 7 years. How would the Republicans' plans need to alter so that you could reach that goal and still meet your——

The President. Well, I think we could reach it in 7 years; I think we could reach it in 8 years; I think we could reach it in 9 years. Our budget has moved forward from 10 to 9 years just because of the improvements in the economy and our deficit reduction package since we started. So we're between 7 and 9 now.

So I think it's obvious—what would have to happen is that we would have to find a formula in which we would monitor the reduction of the deficit as we go toward balance because under either of these programs, no one can predict with any exactitude—I mean, no American corporation has a 7-year budget. They may have a 7-year plan or a 10-year plan or a 5-year plan, but they don't have budgets in that sense, because you can't project what all will happen.

So we have to have sort of checks along the way to make sure we're on our downward target. And then we'd have to find a way to take care of these concerns that I have repeatedly expressed. I do not want us to make education less available. I don't want us to have retrenchment on technology and research. I do not want us to burden, unnecessarily, people who barely have enough money to get by on, who depend on Medicare and Medicaid. I don't want to damage the university hospitals, the children's hospitals, and the urban and rural hospital network of this country with what I think the Medicare budget will do. I don't want to damage the environment. And I do not want to tolerate a $48-billion tax increase on working families with incomes under $30,000. That's wrong.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's 103d news conference began at 11:29 a.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House.

Message to the Congress Transmitting Budget Deferrals

October 19, 1995

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974, I herewith report three deferrals of budgetary resources, totaling $122.8 million.