

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions 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 that would 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. Mr. President, can you think of anything positive to say about the Bosnian peace plan that has been offered?

The President. Yes, I think 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. But 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. When I was at Georgetown, I took 3 years of 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 the Bilderberg meeting.

Foreign Minister Kinkel. Oh, I see. For some days?

The President. For several days. The Bilderberg meeting was 3 or 4 days, I would guess.

Foreign Minister Kinkel. That means that you understand a little bit 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.