

talked to Senator Dole today. Did he agree with that? What's going to happen? Is there a meeting on Wednesday? Also, the last proposal you put on the table, did that make a lot of new major concessions?

The President. Well, let me try to answer all those questions. First of all, we all pledged, all the parties, that we would not discuss our proposals that would require all of us to agree. So I don't believe that I should violate the understandings that we had in our meeting to discuss the specifics.

Let me say that we have come very close together, I believe. We have come most of the way. The differences in dollars are not as different now as some of the differences in policies. We have also made some remarkable progress on policies in some areas. We've had some interesting discussions, for example, on what we should do for small business, arising out of the White House Conference on Small Business. We've talked a lot about the serious problems that would befall our farmers if farm legislation is not enacted, or at least this farm bill extended—should it be allowed to lapse; we can't have that. So we've talked about a lot of other things. We've had long, exhaustive discussions about welfare reform in an attempt to resolve that in the context of these negotiations. So I think the talks have been good, even though there are still some thorny difficulties remaining.

I called Senator Dole today because I just kind of wanted to check in with him and get a reality check. I said, "You know, when we left that meeting I asked you and I asked the Democratic leaders to consider a proposal that I made because I had not made it to the Democrats either. I wanted them, all four, to look at it. We had an agenda of things that our staffs were going to work on during this week, and we characterized it quite consciously as a recess. And I still feel that we can and should reach an agreement. And I just want to make sure you feel that way, and if so, we'll keep working together." And I got a pretty good response.

Now, I have not had a chance to talk to the Speaker. But I can tell you this: When we left, we agreed that they would consider the last suggestion I made, all of them. We agreed that there would be certain things that we would work on together and with the Governors. We agreed that this would be a recess, and we

agreed that we would meet on Wednesday. So I assume that all that is still the way it was agreed.

Q. Well, are the American people going to have to tolerate one shutdown after another and neglect of all their services?

The President. Well, as you know, I didn't—I don't approve of any of these shutdowns. I think Congress was wrong to do it the first time. I think it was wrong to continue. I was pleased when Senator Dole said that that policy should be abandoned, and I was pleased when the Speaker said that it was morally indefensible to hold the Federal employees hostage. So I do not believe it will shut down again. There is no need to have a shutdown again.

I'm telling you, we're not that far apart. If the objective is balancing the budget and giving an appropriate tax cut, we are not that far apart. And we ought to resolve the policy issues we can resolve, put the ones we can't to the side. There will be plenty of things to argue about in the election season, but this is something we ought to give the American people. And I think we will. I'm quite confident. I think we will.

Mr. Blitzer [Wolf Blitzer, Cable News Network].

President's Visit to Bosnia

Q. Mr. President, could you explain to us why it's so important that you go to Bosnia at this moment, when U.S. troops and NATO troops are still trying to implement the peace agreement and having all sorts of logistical problems, and the security situation, frankly, is not very good, as well? Why endanger yourself and the deployment in order to go to Bosnia right now?

The President. Well, first of all, I do not believe that in going there I would endanger the deployment. And the judgment about whether I am in danger is one that is made by the Secret Service, and they believe we can make the trip that we have scheduled. I would not go if the commanders were not ready for me to come.

As you know, I wanted very much to go there over Christmas, on Christmas Eve. But our commander there said that it was an inappropriate thing to do because of the disruption in the deployment.

I think it's important that I go see the troops, that I see firsthand how this mission that I have