

Secondly, I am comfortable that we're making good progress on tax relief. Those of you who covered my campaign might remember there was a period of time in which members of the media were saying, "Well, are you ready to abandon your plan?" And I said, "No, I don't think so. I think this is the right thing for America." And all of a sudden, now it's exciting for this administration to know that the Congress will be voting on a crucial element, a meaningful tax relief.

As I understand, there's going to be a—people will have a chance to vote for another version of it, as well, on the floor of the House. And that's fine. That's good and dandy. We're confident and feel good about the chances of our view of how tax relief ought to take place. And we're confident that will be positively received.

I know it's going to be positively received by the American people when they hear that we've got ample cashflow coming into our Treasury to meet important priorities and, at the same time, with fiscal discipline, with setting priorities and funding them, and not letting the size of Government

grow like it has in the past, that we can make the case that someone's mom is going to get their Medicare check, someone is going to get their Social Security check, and at the same time, people are going to get their own money back so they can make the decisions on how to spend—what's best for their families, how to spend their own money.

And that's the fundamental crux of this debate. The crux of this debate is, do we want to explode the size of the Federal Government, do we want to increase these baselines of the Federal Government, or do we want to have fiscal responsibility, commonsense approach to the budgeting, and trust people with their own money? And tomorrow is going to be an important step toward trusting people with their own money.

Q. Thank you.

The President. See you in Fargo.

NOTE: The exchange began at 1:53 p.m. in Secretary O'Neill's office at the Department of the Treasury. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to Employees at the Department of the Treasury *March 7, 2001*

Thank you. I'm glad the Secretary invited me back. It's always nice to call on your neighbors. And as you know, we're neighbors. I get to look at this majestic building every day, and I was looking forward to the opportunity to come over and thank all the folks who work here.

We're in this deal together. Our job is to make sure that this great country fulfills its promise for everybody. And I know a lot of times people don't give you the proper—your proper due, your proper thanks for working on behalf of the American people. So from the 43d President, thank you

for what you do for America. I appreciate your hard work.

I hope you're as excited about your job as I am—[*laughter*]—about mine. [*Laughter*] It's a huge honor to be your President. It really is. And it's a huge honor to be the President of the people. As you know, I'm taking to the road on occasion. Tomorrow I'm going to Fargo, North Dakota, and South Dakota and Louisiana. I decided to drop in on my own home State of Texas for the weekend. But it is so refreshing to be able to take a message to the people that in Washington we listen to you, that

we understand we're the servants of the people.

So I look forward to going to work every morning here, but I also look forward to taking the message that I'm—the particular message that I'm dealing with at the moment to the people. Right now we're talking about tax relief and tax reform. I've got a good partner in this effort in your Secretary.

By the way, you'll find him to be a pretty darn unusual man. *[Laughter]* He is successful. He thinks outside the box in a positive way. When given a task, he's performance oriented. He's going to expect the same of you all, but he'll be eminently fair. He will listen. He will work to build a team. That's the kind of man he is. But first things first—I got to see this firsthand when I swore him in—he's got his priorities straight. He loves his family. His wife and children and grandchildren are his priority. And that's important—that's important.

We'll spend a lot of time talking about taxes right now, and by the way, I feel like we're going to have a pretty good day in the House of Representatives tomorrow. The message is slowly but surely getting out that we've got enough money coming into the Treasury to meet important obligations, but we've also got enough money to remember who paid the bills in the first place, and those are the working folks, the people who pay the taxes. And I think we're going to have a good day tomorrow.

And there will be other issues we'll be talking about: of course, the Treasury Department, and many of you work on issues relating to trade and collection, law enforcement. There's a lot of issues that take place here. But there's no bigger issue than to remember priorities in life. There's no bigger issue—the way I like to put it is

this: There's no bigger issue for the President to remind the moms and dads of America, if you happen to have a child, be fortunate to have a child, your biggest priority is going to be to love your children. There's no bigger responsibility.

Some might say, "Well, that message just doesn't seem to fit in the Treasury Department." *[Laughter]* No, it fits everywhere. It fits all departments, because our jobs are to not only represent the people, but our job is to work on the collective will of the country, to uplift this country, to make sure the best is available for all who are willing to work for it. And it starts with teaching our children right from wrong.

If you find a neighbor in need—I know inside the walls here, people go out of their way to mentor, and I want to thank you for that. If you're in your neighborhood, in your community, and you find a neighbor in need and you turn to that neighbor and say, "What can I do to help," I want to thank you for that. The greatness of America really is as a result of the collective hearts of decent, caring people.

At any rate, I love being your President. I'm honored to be on the same team that you're on. And I'm so pleased that you've got a really good man running this Department, a man who will remind you on a constant basis—a man who will remind you, and probably remind me on occasion, that it's the results that matter, that working hard is good, but that we all stand here to represent the American people.

Thank you for your hard work, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. outside Treasury Secretary Paul H. O'Neill's office.