

where we are going with our Government and the decisions we will be making in elections—that is what politics is about, to set the direction of Government, and we will be doing that.

We start with some basic things. We start with putting priorities on the role of the Federal Government and then funding those priorities. Again, not everyone will agree, but that needs to be done, it seems to me. There is no end to the way we can spend money. There are many programs on which we can spend it. I believe we can start by saying to ourselves: What are the legitimate functions of the Federal Government? What should the taxpayers' money be used for, and what are the priorities?

When we come to some agreement on that and, in fact, have begun to fund those priorities adequately—I just came from a breakfast with the Commandant of the Marine Corps. Having been in the Marine Corps, I was happy to be there. The defense of this country is one of the real priorities, and certainly we need to fund the military adequately. We need to fund education. We need to fund health care. There are a number of things, perhaps, at which we ought to take a long look.

The President has proposed 43, I believe—in the neighborhood of 40—new programs. There is a surplus, he says, so let's spend the money. Fine, but let's take a look at the priorities and see, with respect to local governments, if this is where it ought to be done.

Social Security: I do not think there is anyone who does not agree that Social Security is an issue that is a high priority. As I said yesterday, these young people who are starting to pay into that program will pay the largest percentage of their income for a longer time than they will pay in any other tax. Are they going to have benefits at the end of 40 or 50 years? The answer should be, yes, they will. To do that, we have to make some changes.

There are no proposals in this budget to make any significant changes in Social Security, other than to take something out of the general fund, which is not a long-range proposal. We have some ideas how we can do that.

The other thing we have to recognize, even though certainly it is a step in the right direction, is the idea of reducing the deficit with Social Security funds. We have to take a long look at that. It is a good idea, and we should put that Social Security money there as opposed to spending it in the general budget, but the fact is that we are replacing publicly held debt with some other debt that has to be repaid by the taxpayers when that Social Security is drawn out. It is less expensive as well, so it is a good idea, and it does get it out of the grasp of the Congress.

What we ought to be doing, if we are serious about the debt, is instead of spending more, we ought to be saying: Let's take a certain amount of that money out of the operating funds, decide over a period of time we are going

to pay off this debt, and do it as one does with a home mortgage—we are going to pay so much every year for 15 years; not Social Security money, but regular operating money.

That Social Security money also needs to be taken out of our grasp, and we are hoping we can do that by having individual accounts where Social Security money belongs to the older person who paid into it, where those dollars, as a way of ensuring there will be benefits, can be invested in equities or bonds and will produce a higher return. It will also belong to the person. If they are unfortunate enough not to live to get all the benefits, it will go into their estate.

These are the things we ought to be talking about, not spending \$400 billion on new programs, not going through a State of the Union Message in which there is \$4 billion a minute proposed. That is, I believe, a reckless budget, and I do not think that budget is going to move in this Congress without a considerable amount of change.

There are, hopefully, some things on which we want to agree with the President. He wants to talk about strengthening the military. We ought to do that. We ought to do something to encourage recruiting, to encourage retention, and to provide what is necessary to carry out the missions of the military. We certainly should do that.

We want to do some more things for schools based on the idea that it be given to the districts, that they can make the decisions as to how that is done, so we can strengthen education.

We ought to be doing something about Medicare prescriptions. We have a program that can be done that keeps it in the private sector generally and allows those who have supplemental programs to continue to have them, perhaps supplement them with a tax reduction but not to do an overall health program, as the President tried before. That is not what we want to do.

It is interesting that, of course, we have this great surge of enthusiasm over the idea of spending all the money we possibly can, but we ought to be thinking about taking a minimum amount of money from the taxpayers of this country to run the Government. It has to be paid. Everybody understands that. But when we do have things like surpluses over time—certainly we do not want to be reckless—but to call every tax reduction reckless is distressing. That money belongs to the people who paid into it.

If we do not have something to limit these kinds of surpluses, the very thing will happen the President is talking about now, and that is, we will find a way to spend it. What we are looking for is a way to adequately finance the Government, to deal with those things that are high priorities for America, to do something about the national debt, to secure Social Security, and then return this money to where it came from so that it is not here, so it has an opportunity to be in the communities, to

be in the towns, to be in the States, and to strengthen this economy. That is what keeps the economy going is people having money to invest and create jobs and these are the directions most important to us.

I wanted to let everyone know there are certainly more directions we will take. There are different ideas, all legitimate, as to where we should go. I hope as we proceed, we have an idea of where we want to end up.

I was reading "Alice in Wonderland" the other night. Remember when Alice fell down and she did not quite know where she was going. She ran into various people. She talked to the rabbit who did not have any ideas, except to promote himself, and the mushroom, who was very unpleasant, and the queen who was going to cut off everybody's head. Finally, she came to a juncture in the road, and there was the Cheshire Cat sitting in a tree. She said: Mr. Cat, what road should I take?

He said: Where do you want to go?

Alice said: I don't know.

The cat said: It doesn't make any difference then, you take whatever road you choose.

We need to know where we want to be when we look at this budget, what it has to do with principles of government, the principles of smaller government, the principles of adequate government, and then try to avoid the idea that there are some bucks out there. So let's try to find a way to spend them.

I suspect that is what we will hear a great deal about in this session. Unfortunately, I believe we will hear more about issues that can be used politically than we will about trying to solve problems. There are some we have identified and with which we agree. We need to come together and find some solutions to those particular issues. The country will be much better off.

I thank the Chair for the time, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THOMAS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, momentarily I will ask consent for the Senate to go to S. 1287, the nuclear waste bill. I know there have been negotiations underway in an effort to reach a comprehensive agreement on a manager's amendment to the nuclear waste bill. I thank Senator MURKOWSKI for the work

he has put into this important legislation now going back at least 2 years.

We have had a good amount of time spent on this legislation on the floor of the Senate, having passed it once before. A lot of work has gone into it this year. I believe we are within the realm of being able to get an agreement which would allow this legislation to move forward and be completed in a very fair way this week.

I also extend my appreciation to the Democratic whip, Senator REID, for his diligence and for his work. He has always made an extra effort to make sure we are communicating and there are not any surprises or dilatory actions taken as we try to come to an agreement that is acceptable to the largest number of people. Senator BRYAN of Nevada is here. This is very important to these two Senators and to their State. I understand that and I have always tried to be sensitive, understanding their need to offer amendments or to make statements, and to be very careful as we consider this legislation. I thank them.

I understand negotiations have been underway between Senator MURKOWSKI in discussions with Senator BINGAMAN and others, but I do think we need to go forward. This is important legislation. I believe we are very close to getting an agreement that is going to be acceptable to a large number of Senators. We do need to have either this agreement worked out and understood so we can move forward without a cloture vote or go ahead and go to cloture because we have to set up a process that allows this to be considered, hopefully favorably, and completed this week. We have been working on it a long time and now is the time to begin to close the deliberations and pass this legislation.

I understand Senator REID has been attending a hearing and is on his way so we can proceed with this action. I do not wish to proceed without his presence because I know if any procedural action or any agreement is worked out, he wants to be here and be a part of what is done. I do say, though, I do have a commitment on the House side I am going to have to attend. I was supposed to speak at 11 o'clock, so I do need to go to the House to carry out my commitment as soon as possible. I will withhold any formal request at this time, but by making this comment now I hope maybe we can move expeditiously to call up this bill and to filing cloture.

I have one final comment. I say again, as I have said several times in the Senate last year and the year before and again this year, this is one of the most important environmental bills we will have in this Congress. Billions of dollars have been spent on this issue, and an inordinate amount of time in the Senate, trying to find a way to get it done. If we can come to an agreement and get this legislation completed, I believe history will look back on this action as one of the most

important bills we will have done this year. If, at the end of this week, we will have already completed the final version of bankruptcy legislation, which included a minimum wage increase and tax relief for small businessmen and businesswomen, and address the question of health care costs, and then pass this important nuclear waste bill, we will be off on a very positive step. It will be done in a way I think is fair to both sides of the aisle. We can continue to make progress. As soon as Senator REID arrives, we will move forward on the nuclear waste legislation.

I observe the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ENZI). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LOTT. I thank the Senators for being here as we prepare to move forward on this important legislation. I explained what has been occurring and the need to move forward.

NUCLEAR WASTE POLICY AMENDMENTS ACT OF 1999

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to consider S. 1287, the nuclear waste bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1287) to provide for the storage of spent nuclear fuel pending completion of the nuclear waste repository, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, again, while the Senators from Nevada are here, I have already noted my appreciation for the cooperation of the Senators from Nevada. We wanted to make sure we did not go forward without their presence.

AMENDMENT NO. 2808

(To provide a complete substitute)

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I send a manager's amendment to the desk. This was circulated to the Members on Friday. I know there are others who need to review this. I hope they will take advantage of the opportunity they have to review it.

Mr. BRYAN. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. LOTT. I yield to the Senator.

Mr. BRYAN. Mr. President, I inquire of the distinguished majority leader, the Friday draft is the one from which we are working. There have been so many. I just want to be sure. Is this the one marked February 4, 2000, 4:45 p.m.?

Mr. LOTT. I believe it is.

Mr. BRYAN. That is consistent with our understanding. I thank the Senator.

Mr. REID. If I may say to the leader.

Mr. LOTT. I yield to the Senator.

Mr. REID. I say to the leader and the chairman of the full committee that I am sorry I was late, but we had a hearing on suicide which Senator SPECTER was gracious enough to hold. I was there because, as the leader knows, my dad killed himself a number of years ago. It was a very emotional hearing for me. I know it has been inconvenient for Senator MURKOWSKI and the leader, Senator BRYAN, and others, but I do appreciate their understanding. The hearing is over, so I can give my full time and attention to this matter. I appreciate everyone allowing me to be late.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I say to the Senator from Nevada, we were aware of this particular hearing and how important and emotional it was for him. We have to be prepared to yield to each other on occasion and be considerate of each other's needs. We certainly understand. I also appreciate his cooperation in moving forward.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Mississippi [Mr. LOTT], for Mr. MURKOWSKI, proposes an amendment numbered 2808.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The text of the amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Amendments Submitted.")

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the amendment to the desk pursuant to the gentlemen's agreement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the pending amendment to S. 1287, the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 1999:

Trent Lott, Frank H. Murkowski, Slade Gorton, Don Nickles, Tim Hutchinson, Conrad Burns, Mike Crapo, Phil Gramm, Thad Cochran, Richard Shelby, Larry E. Craig, Jim Bunning, Judd Gregg, Charles Grassley, Wayne Allard, and Bob Smith of New Hampshire.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, as a result of our gentlemen's agreement last week—and I know all the Senators involved have been working to keep that commitment—I think progress has been made.

I ask unanimous consent that this cloture vote occur at 2:15 p.m. today, that the mandatory quorum be waived, and that Members have until 6 p.m. this evening to file first-degree amendments and 12 noon on Wednesday to file any second-degree amendments.