

The President. I've got a steady pace. I'm calling as I can. I talked to the Prime Minister of India today. It was a phone call that I was going to make, regardless of the natural disaster that took place there. Obviously, a lot of the conversation today was about the aid that our country is sending. A 747 from AID has landed this morning; another one is on its way. We're sending some military planes over, as well. I assured him that our Nation was deeply concerned for the citizenry that had lost their lives. It was not the appropriate time to discuss policy beyond that.

And I will be making other calls, touching base with world leaders. I'll do a lot of that, of course. Good diplomacy really depends upon good personal relations, whether or not we agree with each other on a lot of issues or not. And I'm going to continue the diplomacy that reaches out to people on a regular basis.

Attorney-General-Designate John Ashcroft

Q. On Senator Ashcroft, are you worried that there are going to be more—do you feel he's going to be confirmed, still?

The President. I do believe he's going to be confirmed. But one of my charges is to run the executive branch of Government. And it's important for our Cabinet officers to be confirmed so they can start

doing their job of organizing their departments. Once we get our Cabinet officials through, I'm sure I'll be speaking to the Senate about moving the number twos and threes through, as well, so that we can take hold of this Government. And one of the things I'll be doing when our Cabinet meets is talking about the need for each Cabinet member to be fiscally sound with the taxpayers' money. It's hard to deliver that message when somebody hasn't been confirmed.

So I would just hope there are no further delays. There's been a lot of discussion, a lot of debate. There's been a lot of questionnaires presented and answers filled out. And it's now time for the vote, it seems like to me.

Q. Did you get the Vice President a birthday present?

The Vice President. Not yet. [Laughter]

The President. As a matter of fact—[laughter]—some used coffeecake, perhaps, Mr. Vice President? [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:35 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee of India. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at the Swearing-In Ceremony for Paul H. O'Neill as Secretary of the Treasury January 30, 2001

The President. Well, I'm pleased to welcome Nancy O'Neill and the O'Neill family here. Thank you all for coming. It's an honor for both the Vice President and I to say some words about the Secretary of Treasury. With Paul over at the Treasury, he is literally a next-door neighbor. And I'm going to see a lot of him right here

in this office. He'll be a valued adviser and a steady hand.

Secretary O'Neill has served in this office before, at the Office of Management and Budget. He understands the workings and responsibilities of the executive branch. More than that, he understands the private sector, where he and others like him have been driving our country's economic boom.