

Remarks Prior to a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters  
January 31, 2001

*The President.* Thank you all for coming. In my first Cabinet meeting, we're going to discuss a variety of topics today. I'm going to remind all of us, it's an honor to serve the country. I expect only one standard, and that's the highest of ethical standards. We're putting together a great team to serve America. That's what we're here for.

I am going to talk a little bit about reminding people that a dollar spent is a tax—is somebody's money and that we expect there to be lean budgets, good stewards of the people's money.

We'll hear from some of the Cabinet officers about what may be going on. I suspect the Energy Secretary may want to brief us. I think the Secretary of Treasury will give us an update on what's going on, the economy and tax relief.

I want to assure Americans that they're going to be as proud of this Cabinet as I am. This is a wonderful group of men and women who have agreed to serve their country, for which I'm grateful.

I'll be glad to answer a few questions.

*Tax Relief Legislation*

*Q.* Mr. President, are you beginning to think that Congress might act more quickly on your tax cuts if you break it up into pieces and seek across-the-board tax cut first?

*The President.* I told the Speaker and anybody else who will listen on the House side, where the legislation must begin, that we're interested in the results. If that's what it takes to get the bill through, we'll be willing to listen. This is an administration that's mindful of the difference be-

tween the legislative branch and the executive branch. We will make suggestions if asked. If the Speaker and Chairman Thomas and others believe that the best way to get our plan in place that will help bolster the economy that we believe needs bolstering, we'll listen and work with them.

*Pan Am 103 Verdict*

*Q.* Mr. President, does the verdict in the Pan Am bombing case—should it leave any doubt that Libya was behind the bombing of Pan Am 103 as an act of state?

*The President.* This was a high official. We've made it very clear that this administration is going to hold the Libyans accountable. We expect them to pay reparations. The Secretary of State is in complete agreement.

*Q.* If they pay reparations—

*The President.* Let's see if they do.

*Q.* The Government of Tripoli just announced as we were coming in here that they will accept no responsibility for what happened. What happens now from the U.S. side?

*The President.* We'll develop a plan.

*Secretary of State Colin L. Powell*

*Q.* Welcome back, Mr. Powell.

*The President.* He looks pretty good here, doesn't he? [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:28 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Representative William M. Thomas, chairman, House Committee on Ways and Means. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.