

Clearly there are hundreds of thousands of individuals around this country, not just in the Washington metropolitan area, very anxious this evening, very anxious as to what they are supposed to do tomorrow morning, show up for work and are they going to stay at work, are they going to get paid, are they going to have money to pay their mortgage payments, are they going to have money to pay their car payments and their children's tuition in college.

This is a very critical matter. I understand there are differences of agreement, but I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that, in fact, we do get word very quickly as to how we are going to proceed to try to avert the shutdown of the Federal Government and the incurring of very substantial costs tomorrow and the days thereafter by this impasse.

APPOINTMENT OF ADDITIONAL CONFEREES ON H.R. 2491, SEVEN-YEAR BALANCED BUDGET RECONCILIATION ACT OF 1996

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, under the authority granted in clause 6 of rule X, the Speaker appoints as additional conferees from the Committee on Commerce for consideration of title XVI of the House bill, and subtitle B of title VII of the Senate amendment, and modifications committed to conference: Mr. BRYANT of Texas and Mr. TOWNS.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will notify the Senate of the change in conferees.

PROTECTING HEALTH CARE FOR RETIRED COAL MINERS

(Mr. POSHARD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. POSHARD. Mr. Speaker, over the weekend the so-called Hancock amendment was taken out of the budget reconciliation bill.

This provision would have put at risk the health care coverage of some 100,000 retired coal miners and their families, including several thousand people who live in the coalfields of Illinois.

I appreciate the action taken by the budget negotiators and encourage them to resist any further efforts to change the 1992 Coal Act or disrupt the balanced approach now in place to care for these miners.

The men and women who have worked years to fuel the economy of this Nation do not need their health care coverage put at risk. I appreciate the bipartisan effort which went into putting this law in place and the bipartisan effort which continues today to keep it in place.

In this vein, let me take just a minute to encourage my colleagues in Congress and in the administration to put the same kind of effort into finding

middle ground and solving our budget crisis.

□ 1830

NOTIFY FEDERAL EMPLOYEES OF THEIR STATUS

(Mr. MORAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, there are nearly a million people around the country who do not know tonight whether they should come in to work tomorrow who have been deemed non-essential, whatever that means. We owe it to them, if we cannot take appropriate action tonight, to enable them to go to work tomorrow to at least let them know.

It is the height of absurdity to bring 800,000 people to work tomorrow and then to have to tell them because the Congress did not take action the night before, that they have to turn around and go home. We ourselves do not even know whether our own employees should be coming to work tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, I would strongly urge the majority, the leadership of this body, to at least let those million Federal employees and the many millions who are dependent upon Federal activities throughout this country to know what the state of affairs is tomorrow, and we, as well, need to have some appropriate policy with regard to our own employees.

It is unfair to have them come in to work tomorrow and then tell them we have decided they are not essential and that they will no longer be paid.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KOLBE). Without prejudice to the resumption of business at a future time this evening, and under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members are recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. OLVER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. OLVER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

OPPOSING THE ELIMINATION OF MILK MARKETING ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. ENGLISH] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, Members of the House, reconciliation conferees, I would like to commend the gentleman from New York [Mr. SOLOMON], the gentleman from New York [Mr. PAXON], and the

gentleman from New York [Mr. MCHUGH] for their intrusive, decisive, and successful effort to block a provision of the House-passed 7-year Balanced Budget Reconciliation Act that I believe would have unfairly disrupted the livelihoods of our Nation's dairy farmers.

Reconciliation contained a provision entitled "freedom to milk," which legislates the dismantling of the milk marketing orders. This proposal would deregulate the current system by terminating the price support program effective January 21, 1996.

After speaking with dairy farmers from western Pennsylvania, I can assure you that this would be devastating to the industry. According to a recent Mid-Atlantic Dairyman's Inc. analysis of a Food and Agriculture Policy Institute study, net returns to dairy producers would be projected to go down 65 percent in the first year of deregulation and down 43 percent per year on the average for the first 3 years.

Furthermore, under freedom to milk, Pennsylvania dairy farmers are expected to lose over \$150 million. Low farm milk prices and limited availability of credit, coupled with the fact that our GATT partners can still subsidize their dairy farmers, means that the freedom to farm provision is more than scary. For the small dairy farmer in my district, it is fatal.

Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the present system was not haphazardly scrapped. It has continued to evolve to reflect the needs of the market and consumers. The U.S. dairy industry is one of the most efficient market-oriented dairy industries in the world, and the program which manages this industry costs the Government less than \$70 million each year.

Furthermore, dairy farmers recognize that once again it is time to reform the system, but let us do it constructively.

Why do we not consolidate the orders through the Department of Agriculture's hearing process, simplify the system, and ensure that the small dairy farmer still has input into future reform? Unfortunately, there are still proposals out there to meet the budgetary caps that unfairly tax the dairy farmer, a new 10-cent assessment on top of the existing assessments.

The purpose of agricultural reform and the objective of the reconciliation process is to reduce taxpayer support of farm programs. A new assessment on dairy producers is nothing more than a direct tax upon every dairy farmer in America.

Mr. Speaker, in my view, the appropriate approach is to realize savings through the price support program currently in place. Such a reduction would realize budgetary savings at no expense under current milk prices for all products to the farmers. At the present time, nonfat dry milk is still being marketed at 6 cents over the support price while butter and cheese are currently 35 percent over support levels.

Accordingly, reduction in the taxpayer-funded price support program would not directly impact farmers, yet would still produce the necessary tax savings.

Mr. Speaker, this summer I had an opportunity to talk to dairymen throughout my district, and they are hurting. They are hurting in a way that they have not been in many, many years. We must, at a time like this, be cautious in how we tamper with price supports for dairy producers because there is a real danger that many of these small and even midsize family farmers will be put out of business by a precipitous policy.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BARR). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mrs. CLAYTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. WISE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to exchange my special order time with that of the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE], and that I be listed later in the day, if that is all right with the Chair.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from West Virginia?

There was no objection.

THE BALANCED BUDGET PLAN, MEDICARE AND MEDICAID

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I was very proud today when President Clinton indicated that he would not support, and he would, in fact, veto the continuing resolution because of the increase in the Medicare part B premium.

I think that the public needs to know, and it needs to be reflected more and more amongst ourselves in the House, that essentially this continuing resolution takes away the provision in the current law which, as of January 1, would decrease the amount or the percentage that senior citizens have to pay for their Medicare part B premium, and what the continuing resolution proposes is that the percentage be kept as it is now, which would essentially force an increase in part B premiums as much as, say, \$10 over the next year per month for those senior citizens. That includes almost all senior citizens who take advantage and pay to have themselves covered under Medicare part B, which pays for physician care.

It is amazing to me, Mr. Speaker, that at a time when we spent almost a month or 2 months or even more trying to deal with the whole budget and

come up with the reconciliation and also deal with Medicare, that the Republican leadership continues to insist on increasing Medicare premiums before the time when they ever put together the budget or even have a conference with the budget reconciliation conferees.

I would very much right now like to be at a meeting with the rest of the conferees, with the Democrats and the Republicans, dealing with this budget, dealing with Medicare, dealing with Medicaid. But, so far, all of the meetings have been in secret, just with the Republicans.

I was appointed a conferee for the budget reconciliation a few weeks ago. But we still have not met, because all of the negotiations are taking place on the Republican side without any input or any opportunity for Democrats.

In fact today, in the Washington Post there was an article that said, "Balanced budget plan near complete, Congress may consider massive reconciliation measure on Wednesday." Well, today is Monday. We have not even had a meeting of the reconciliation conferees that was originally called for tonight, but then it was cancelled at the last minute. Now we are told it is tomorrow.

But in the meantime, obviously the Republicans have met in secret and have already decided how they are going to increase the cost to seniors for Medicare, cut their Medicare benefits, and provide tax cuts primarily for wealthy Americans.

There are two very important issues in this budget conference that affect Medicare that I think need to be addressed. In the Senate, unlike the House, nursing home standards were kept intact. In the Senate, unlike the House, the safety net for children, for disabled persons, for pregnant women was kept intact so that there is a guarantee, there continues to be an entitlement in the Senate version of this budget bill that pregnant women, the disabled, and children will get Medicaid and will have health care coverage. But not in the House version.

This is a very important issue, whether or not we are going to continue to have nursing home standards, whether or not we are going to continue to have Medicaid benefits for these disadvantaged groups, and yet there is no meeting of the conferees. Everything is done in secret with the Republican leadership.

Today, there was an article in the New York Times that pointed out that it is very likely, under the Republican leadership bill, that there will become a shortage of nursing home beds for the elderly in the next few years because with the significant amount of money being reduced for Medicaid, there simply will not be any incentive to even have Medicaid beds in nursing homes.

Similarly, we are told the Medicaid safety net for children could be imperiled with the Republican leadership bill because basically the States will not

have the money to provide Medicaid coverage for children.

So I would really like to be a part of this conference where we discuss what is going to happen to the future of our children in terms of their health care coverage, to the future of our nursing homes, whether there will be quality nursing homes, whether there will be enough beds for our citizens in the future.

We do not have that opportunity.

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. PALLONE. I yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. KLECZKA. If I understand correctly, you indicated that the massive bill changing Medicare as we know it is currently being worked on by a group of legislators. Then why, in your estimation, would the Republicans want to put the increase in Medicare premiums for our seniors in this continuing bill to keep the Government running past midnight tonight? Why would they pull that section out and put in the simple bill to keep the Government running? What is the rationale there?

□ 1845

Mr. PALLONE. My understanding is they are so determined that this increase take effect on January 1, that they do not want to negotiate it, they do not want to discuss it, they just want to make sure it is included in the continuing resolution so it takes effect with those increases on January 1.

QUIT STALLING ON BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. FOLEY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to read an editorial from the Port St. Lucie News. The editorial says "Quit Stalling on Budget."

[From the Port St. Lucie News, Nov. 13, 1995]

QUIT STALLING ON BUDGET

The budget debate now underway is messy and inefficient and may ultimately prove very expensive. It is also irresponsible government and reflects no credit on the White House or the Republican-led Congress.

Enacting an annual budget is Congress' principal job, one in which this Congress is embarrassingly behind schedule with only two of 13 appropriations bills enacted. The fiscal year the lawmakers are arguing over is already more than one month gone and will likely be a fourth over with by the time a package is passed.

Congress dug itself into that hole, largely because of deep and continuing disagreements among Republicans newly in the majority.

That led to the latest obstacle to passing a budget, the provocation of an unnecessary veto fight with Clinton by attempting to use stopgap bills to pass measures—elimination of the Commerce Department, restrictions on lobbying by tax-exempt groups, higher Medicare premiums—that should be dealt with elsewhere in the legislative process.

Despite his belated discovery of presidential veto powers, Clinton has given Congress little sense of where he will stand and fight. He absented himself from the budget