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Senate

(Legislative day of Thursday, November 16, 1995)

The Senate met at 9:15 a.m., on the expiration of the recess, and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths.

Lord, we accept this admonition as both a prognosis and a prescription for our deepest need this morning. Trust in You is the only healing antidote to tension. We admit that the tension does grow as sessions of the Senate become longer and debate becomes more intense.

And here we are on a Saturday morning with the fresh memories of loss for some and victories for others over the vote on the budget last evening. Some are proud of their success and others feel their pride is wounded. Meanwhile, Government is shut down in the deadlock between the Congress and the President. We carefully tabulate the balance of criticism or confirmation from our constituencies, but the real question is what You think.

Individually and corporately we put our trust in You. We resist the habitual tendency to lean on our own understanding; we acknowledge our need for Your wisdom in our search for solutions we all can support. As an intentional act of will, we commit to You everything we think, say, and do today. Direct our paths as we give precedence to principle over party and loyalty to You over anything else. We need You, Father. Strengthen each one and strengthen our oneness. In the name of our Lord. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The acting majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, this morning there will be a period for morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each. I have been asked by the distinguished majority leader to advise that further negotiations on a continuing resolution during today's session will go forward. Therefore, rollcall votes are possible, but we will keep the Members informed if there are any further developments. I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business with Senators permitted to speak therein for not to exceed 10 minutes each.

Mr. WELLSTONE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THOMAS). The distinguished Senator from Minnesota.

JESSE BROWN WILL NOT BE SILENCED

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, yesterday morning there was an article in the Washington Post. It dealt with some of the debate that is now taking place about the budget and veterans. We can agree to disagree, but there was one piece in this article that really captured my attention, as a Senator from Minnesota. This was:

The conferees sent what they called a "strong message" of displeasure to Veterans Affairs Secretary Jesse Brown, in the form of sharp cuts in his office's staff and travel budget.

Mr. President, I would like to talk a little bit about Jesse Brown, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Jesse Brown is one of our Nation's most able and outspoken veterans advocates. He is a man who is a Marine combat veteran, a Marine combat hero who served our country with honor and distinction. Mr. President, he is a disabled veteran who, long before he became Secretary of what he calls "For Veterans Affairs," was one of the most important voices and strongest voices for veterans, especially disabled veterans in the United States of America.

I would like to make it very clear, as a Senator from Minnesota, that I do not believe these kinds of attacks, petty attacks on his personal office travel budget, will silence Jesse Brown. My colleagues are sadly mistaken, they are profoundly mistaken, if they believe any form of retaliation will silence this Secretary, who is such a powerful advocate for veterans, based upon his own personal life, based upon his service for this country, and based upon his position.

Since taking office in 1993, let me just list a few of the impressive accomplishments of Secretary Jesse Brown, "Secretary for Veterans."

Agent orange—in 1993, a VA-sponsored review conducted by the National Academy of Sciences found that certain cancers and illnesses could be caused by agent orange exposure. The VA promptly responded by presuming service-connection for these diseases—long overdue.

Mr. President, homeless veterans convened the first National Summit on Homelessness Among Veterans. It is a scandal that such a large percentage of our street people and homeless people are veterans. This Secretary, Jesse Brown, will not be silenced.

Persian Gulf veterans fought hard to make sure Persian Gulf veterans were not forgotten, to compensate certain Persian Gulf veterans with

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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undiagnosed illnesses. Mr. President, Secretary Jesse Brown will not be silenced.

Streamline and make the VA more responsive, a plan to decentralize the VA national health care system, which is now being implemented. Mr. President, Secretary Jesse Brown will not be silenced.

Women veterans: He implemented a series of health care initiatives for women, established eight women veterans Comprehensive Health Care Centers. Mr. President, Secretary Jesse Brown will not be silenced.

There are many more accomplishments that I could list, but I want to just end with one personal story, which I think tells a very large story about Secretary Jesse Brown.

Tim Gilmore fought for our country in the Vietnam war. He suffered from agent orange exposure, and he died of cancer. Toward the end of his life, Tim Gilmore was tormented by one fact. He knew he would not have long to live, but he had not received any compensation. By the rules that we operate under, if he did not receive any compensation before he passed away, there was a very real question whether his family would ever receive any compensation. He was tormented by this.

When Secretary Jesse Brown came to my State, this family made a personal appeal to him, the veterans community made a personal appeal to him to somehow, please, cut through the bureaucracy and please have some compassion and please be an advocate for Tim Gilmore and his family.

Mr. President, I made the same appeal. Time went by, Tim Gilmore became weaker, and it was very clear he was going to pass away soon. A very short period of time before Tim Gilmore passed away, Secretary Jesse Brown made sure that he received compensation, made sure that his family would receive that compensation.

That family has never forgotten that. To Tim Gilmore, a Vietnam vet who died from agent orange exposure, that was one of the most important things before he passed away. I will be indebted, as a Senator from Minnesota, to Secretary Jesse Brown forever, for his compassion and his strength and commitment to people.

I will say to my colleagues, you can do whatever you want to his travel budget or personal budget, but you are not going to silence him. He is going to continue to talk about this budget and how it affects veterans.

I will mention one point I have been focused on, as a U.S. Senator, and I will be pleased to debate this with anyone. I think what we are doing here in the health care field puts way too many veterans in very serious jeopardy for the following reason: Our veterans population is also becoming an aging population. We all know that.

If you have reductions in Medicare—and we continue to go through this debate about whether it is lessening the rate of increase or a cut. I do not even

want to get into the semantics. I want to tell you, there is only one way you look at it. Look at the year 2002; ask how many people are going to be 65 years of age or over, how many of them are going to be 85 years of age or over; you ask what kind of services they are going to require, and you ask whether or not you are investing the resources to make sure they get them. We are not.

If you have those reductions in Medicare and reductions in medical assistance, you are going to have more of the elderly people coming to the veterans health care system for health care. Then, if you have the reduction in the VA health care system as well, it becomes a triple whammy.

Secretary Jesse Brown is going to continue to be a strong advocate for veterans. I will say to my colleagues, he is going to continue to challenge your budget and he is going to continue to say, "Why don't you ask the oil companies to sacrifice a little bit, or the coal companies, or the tobacco companies, or the pharmaceutical companies? And how come you give all this money to military contractors, above and beyond what the Pentagon asked for? And how come you have all these rapid depreciation allowances and cuts in capital gains?"

I listened to my colleague from Mississippi speak with considerable intelligence the other day about this. He is a very able Senator. But this Secretary of Veterans Affairs is going to continue to challenge these priorities. He should.

We do not need any hate, I think all of us agree. But we will have the debate. It will be an important debate for this country. I believe Secretary Jesse Brown will be a very powerful voice in that debate. I come to the floor of the Senate to speak in his behalf today.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, 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. DOLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that further proceedings under the quorum call be dispensed with.

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

THE BALANCED BUDGET ACT OF 1995

Mr. DOLE. First, I want to thank all my colleagues for what has been happening over the past several months as far as putting together the Balanced Budget Act of 1995 is concerned. It was a massive undertaking. People said we could never do it, never make the hard decisions, but we did. We kept our word with the American people. And we have, I think, a product we can be proud of.

It may not be perfect—probably there are some things we can change, cor-

rect, modify—but it is a fundamental change in the direction this country has been headed for the past, at least, two or three decades. I know the President has indicated he is going to veto it. And if he does—as I assume he will—I hope he also will say he is seriously concerned about the problems we raise and try to correct them, that he will sit down with us in serious negotiations and have some budget that we can all hold up and all take credit for that will balance the budget in the 7 years, reform welfare as we know it, preserve and strengthen Medicare, provide tax cuts for families with children, and also tax cuts to stimulate the economy, a capital gains rate reduction, estate tax relief. There are hundreds of provisions in this bill.

I particularly, again, want to thank my colleague, Senator DOMENICI, from New Mexico, and members of the Budget Committee for their outstanding work. And I failed to mention Senator ROTH, the new chairman of the Finance Committee. About 80 percent of this heavy lifting was done by the Finance Committee under the chairmanship of Senator BILL ROTH from Delaware. He did an outstanding job. All the tax cuts, the Medicare and Medicaid provisions, all these very controversial areas were under the jurisdiction of the Finance Committee. Certainly Senator ROTH deserves our commendation too.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, we hope to continue to negotiate today and perhaps have some agreement on a continuing resolution by day's end, maybe not, but we will try. We have just sent the President the Defense appropriations bill. If he signs that, about 182,000 people will go back to work. That is almost one-quarter of the total.

We hope he will look at that carefully, particularly in light of the fact that he may be sending American troops to Bosnia. It would seem to me he would want to sign the Defense appropriations bill. I hope he does not send American troops to Bosnia without first coming to Congress, but in the event he does, either event, I think the appropriations bill is important.

I would like to announce, but I am not quite able to, that there will be no votes today. We will check on both sides of the aisle to see if we can reach an agreement on a continuing resolution and if anyone would require a roll-call vote. If not, then we could say no votes today. So, we will begin that process on both sides of the aisle. As soon as we have word, we will get back and make that announcement. I know some Members probably have other plans for the day.

What that would mean, if we had no votes, if we did reach an agreement, we could simply pass a continuing resolution by a voice vote, vitiate the final action taken on the CR we had a day or two ago, amend it, send it to the House and ask them to concur with the Senate amendment. So we could do that by voice vote.