

AGRICULTURAL MARKET TRANSITION ACT—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the conference report to accompany H.R. 2854.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The committee on conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 2854) a bill to modify the operation of certain agricultural programs, having met, after full and free conference, have agreed to recommend and do recommend to their respective Houses this report, signed by a majority of the conferees.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of the conference report.

(The conference report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of March 25, 1996.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Debate on the conference report is limited to 6 hours; 2 hours under the control of the Senator from Indiana, Senator LUGAR; 1 hour under the control of the Senator from Vermont, Senator LEAHY; and 3 hours under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee.

Mr. DOLE. Madam President, I hope most, if not all, of the debate will be used this evening. I know the Senator from Indiana, the chairman of the committee, is here and prepared to debate. I know there are some others who may want to be heard tomorrow. But hopefully we can conclude action on this tomorrow morning and get it over to the House so they can conclude it before they take up health care; otherwise, we are going to have a problem getting it passed before the Easter recess.

So there will be no further votes tonight. That has already been announced. I thank the chairman of the committee. I think Senator LEAHY is also going to be here for some debate. I know the distinguished Democratic leader has time reserved too.

Mr. DASCHLE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority leader.

THE DEATH OF EDMUND S. MUSKIE

Mr. DASCHLE. On behalf of myself, Senator DOLE, Senator COHEN, and Senator SNOWE, I send a resolution to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the resolution.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 234) relative to the death of Edmund S. Muskie.

Whereas, the Senate fondly remembers former Secretary of State, former Governor of Maine, and former Senator from Maine, Edmund S. Muskie,

Whereas, Edmund S. Muskie spent six years in the Maine House of Representatives, becoming minority leader,

Whereas, in 1954, voters made Edmund S. Muskie the State's first Democratic Governor in 20 years,

Whereas, after a second two-year term, he went on in 1958 to become the first popularly elected Democratic Senator in Maine's history;

Whereas, Edmund S. Muskie in 1968, was chosen as Democratic Vice-Presidential nominee,

Whereas, Edmund S. Muskie left the Senate to become President Carter's Secretary of State,

Whereas, Edmund S. Muskie served with honor and distinction in each of these capacities: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate has heard with profound sorrow and deep regret the announcement of the death of the Honorable Edmund S. Muskie, formerly a Senator from the State of Maine.

Resolved, That the Secretary communicate these resolutions to the House of Representatives and transmit an enrolled copy thereof to the family of the deceased.

Resolved, That when the Senate adjourns today, it adjourns as a further mark of respect to the memory of the deceased Senator.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the resolution?

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

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, in the earliest days of our Nation, George Washington said it was the duty of public servants to "raise a standard to which the wise and the honest can repair."

In his more than five decades as a public servant, Senator Edmund Muskie not only raised the standard of wisdom and honesty in public office. On many occasions and in many ways, he set the standard.

Today I join my colleagues and, indeed, all of America, in saying goodbye to this extraordinary American.

Senator Muskie served two terms as Governor of Maine—something of a minor political miracle in such a rock-ribbed Republican State.

He also served with great dignity and distinction as our Nation's Secretary of State under President Carter.

But it was his service in this Chamber, and as his party's candidate for Vice President, for which Senator Muskie will be best remembered—and rightly so.

In 1974, I came to Washington as a Senate staffer. Senator Muskie had already served 15 years.

What first impressed me about him was his compassion, and his unshakable belief in the infinite possibilities of America. It was a belief he learned from his immigrant father, a belief that animated his entire life.

Ed Muskie knew that government cannot guarantee anyone the good life. But government has a responsibility to help people seize possibilities to make a good life for themselves, their families and their communities.

He held other beliefs deeply as well.

Ed Muskie believed that we have an obligation to be good stewards of this fragile planet.

He was an expert on air and water pollution, and he served as floor manager for two of the most important environmental laws ever—the Clean Air

Act of 1963 and the Water Quality Act of 1965.

Ed Muskie believed that more was needed to solve the problem of poverty than money from Washington. Thirty years ago, he called for a new creative federalism.

"No matter how much the Federal partner provides," he said, "no Federal legislation, no executive order, no administrative establishment can get to the heart of most of the basic problems confronting the state governments today."

Ed Muskie believed that politics ought to be a contest of ideas, not an endless series of personal attacks.

In 1970, Ed Muskie was the presumptive front-runner for his party's 1972 Presidential nomination. In that role, he was the victim of malicious and false attacks.

Rather than counter-attack, Senator Muskie appealed for reason and decency and truth. I want to quote from a televised speech he made back then, because I think it bears repeating today.

"In these elections * * * something has gone wrong," he said.

There has been name calling and deception of almost unprecedented volume. Honorable men have been slandered. Faithful servants of the country have had their motives questioned and their patriotism doubted. . . .

The danger from this assault is not that a few more Democrats might be defeated—the country can survive that. The true danger is that the American people will have been deprived of that public debate, that opportunity for fair judgment, which is the heartbeat of the democratic process. And that is something the country cannot afford.

Senator Muskie went on to say:

There are only two kinds of politics. They are not radical or reactionary, or conservative and liberal, or even Democratic or Republicans. They are only the politics of fear, and the politics of trust.

Senator Muskie believed in the politics of trust.

And he believed in honest negotiation. Testifying before the Senate a few years ago, Senator Muskie said, "There's always a way to talk."

There is always a way to talk.

In his later years, Senator Muskie helped found an organization called the Center for National Priorities to find new ways to talk in a reasoned manner about the big problems facing our nation.

Today, we mourn Ed Muskie's death. But let us also celebrate his extraordinary life. And let us re-dedicate ourselves to the beliefs that shaped that life.

The belief that America is and must remain a land of possibilities—for all of us.

The belief that we must protect our environment.

The belief that it takes more than money alone to solve our problems. It takes hard work and personal responsibility, and people working together.

Let us rededicate ourselves to Senator Muskie's belief the politics can and should be a contest of ideas, and

that we have a responsibility to talk straight to the American people.

And let us remember that we have a responsibility to talk straight to each other. There are many great and urgent issues facing this chamber.

There must be a way we can talk.

Ed Muskie is gone. But we can keep his spirit alive in this chamber. The choice is ours.

In closing, I offer my deepest condolences to Senator Muskie's widow, Jane, to their children, and to his many friends the world over.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no objection, the resolution is agreed to.

The resolution (S. Res. 234) was agreed to.

Mr. DOLE. I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. DASCHLE. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. DASCHLE. I yield the floor.

AGRICULTURAL MARKET TRANSITION ACT—CONFERENCE REPORT

The Senate continued with the consideration of the conference report.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GORTON). The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, it is a privilege to bring before the Senate H.R. 2854, the Federal Agricultural Improvement and Reform Act. The farm bill that we are to pass after this debate will make the most sweeping changes in agricultural policy since the days of the New Deal. These changes begin a new era in which markets rather than Government will dominate farm decisions.

H.R. 2854 offers farmers more freedom to plant crops without Government constraint than they have had in decades. This legislation turns farm programs from an uncontrollable entitlement to a system of fixed and declining income-support payments. From now on, the Federal Government will stop trying to control how much food, feed, and fiber our Nation produces. Instead, we will trust the market for the first time in a long while to direct those signals.

Farmers during this time will not be left unprotected in a sometimes unforgiving world marketplace. H.R. 2854 provides new protection against export embargoes, ensuring that the United States will be a reliable supplier of agricultural products. The bill also strengthens our successful export credit programs, placing new emphasis on high-value exports that now constitute more than half of our overseas sales.

Back at home in this country, where resource conservation is increasingly important not only to producers but to all citizens, this bill offers new incentives to manage natural resources wisely. The Environmental Quality Incentive Program will share the cost of measures that enhance water quality and control pollution. The Conserva-

tion Reserve Program will be renewed through the year 2002, extending the many environmental benefits of that historic program.

This legislation will require more responsible use of taxpayer money. For example, until now, the Farm Services Agency has been compelled by law to make new loans to borrowers who are already delinquent. This bill will end that practice and other abuses of our lending programs.

H.R. 2854 reauthorizes food stamps and other important nutrition programs. It consolidates and streamlines rural development programs. It repeals dozens of outdated or unfunded Federal programs and requirements.

The President's spokesmen have stated that the President will sign this legislation with reluctance. I am not at all reluctant in my support. This is the best farm legislation I have seen in my congressional career.

Farmers who grow so-called program crops—wheat, feed grains, upland cotton, and rice—will be able to sign a 7-year production flexibility contract. They will receive 7 years of declining income support payments. These payments differ from the so-called deficiency payments now made under current law because the contract payments are unrelated to market price levels.

Farmers will be required to maintain their farm in agricultural use, to comply with some limitations on the planting of fruits and vegetables and to meet conservation requirements. The Federal Government will no longer tell them how many acres to plant or rigorously control their planting choices. This bill deregulates U.S. production agriculture.

As we approach the day when this bill will become law, I wish to salute the ranking Democratic member of the Agriculture Committee, Senator PATRICK LEAHY of Vermont. When he was chairman of the Agriculture Committee, I worked with him in a bipartisan way whenever I could. He has extended the same courtesy to me. H.R. 2854 is a better bill because of that partnership.

At the same time, I also want to praise the chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, Mr. PAT ROBERTS of Kansas. His tenacity led to reforms that a short time ago were clearly unthinkable.

However, those who most deserve this salute are the agriculture producers of the country that we all serve. They are the reason this Nation exceeds all others in the productivity of our agriculture system and in the abundance of our food supply. I am proud to be one of them. They deserve a Government that stands behind them without standing in their way. They want a farm bill that is designed for the new century. We have given that to them. That is what this bill represents. It heralds a future of opportunities, a future not without risk but full of challenge, and a future in which American farmers can compete, excel, and prosper.

Mr. President, the FAIR Act is, in fact, good for farmers for these reasons. First of all, flexibility. Under the FAIR Act, the act that we are debating this evening, farmers will be able to plant the mix of crops that best suits their climate, agronomic conditions, and market opportunities. That is extremely important. That is at the heart of this bill.

The United States stands at a remarkable point in history in which we have opportunities to supply markets all over the world if we are capable of fulfilling demand. Indeed, we will be more capable under this legislation. The opportunities for farmers to make money under the FAIR Act have never been better. That is a major reason why farmers support this legislation.

Simplicity: Farmers can enter into a 7-year contract and, in many cases, will not need to visit the United States Department of Agriculture again. Much of the endless rulemaking and many of the costly regulations that accompany today's farm programs will be eliminated. Certainly, farmers will know all the program parameters and the payment rates for the next 7 years at the time of signing. That signing, Mr. President, will occur in the 45 days following signature of this legislation by the President of the United States.

Under current programs, payment rates often change after program sign-up, and payments in future years are unknown. A known stream of payments, guaranteed by this legislation, will provide certainty to farm lending and all manner of farm business decisions.

Let me mention the factor of opportunity. Farmers will be able to adjust planting decisions to take advantage of market opportunities as they occur. Current programs force farmers to follow old planting patterns and U.S. Department of Agriculture regulations rather than profit opportunities.

Let me mention profitability. According to the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute, under FAIR, the act that we are discussing tonight, gross farm income will expand by 13 percent; net farm income will expand by 27 percent over the next 10 years. This occurs while Government payments to farmers decline by 21 percent during that period of time.

Growth: Farmers will be able to adjust plantings and take advantage of growth in the high-value processed product markets. Current programs often force farmers to limit plantings and plan for stagnant low-value bulk markets in order to qualify for the payments under the current programs.

The legislation that we are talking about is a revolution of consequence, perhaps the greatest in 60 years. I say that, Mr. President, because we are now in a situation in which the market-distorting target price system is replaced by one of certainty to farmers—but also to taxpayers, also to budget writers.

Let me explain for just a moment, Mr. President, how this works. In the