

of this program, it is the intention of the managers of this conference report that the Secretary of Agriculture extend the provisions of current regulations governing entry into the marketing loan and establishment of the repayment rate. Also, it is the intention that the Secretary of Agriculture continue to establish the prevailing world price for upland cotton in the same manner utilized for the 1991 through 1995 crops.

This farm bill preserves and enhances many of our successful environmental and conservation programs. For example, the Conservation Reserve Program is reauthorized and existing participants are eligible to reapply upon expiration of their contracts. The Wetlands Reserve Program is reauthorized with modifications to allow for non-permanent 30-year easements. I am very pleased that a program which I introduced to enhance our Nation's wildlife population was included in the conference agreement. The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program is a new cost-share program for landowners, which will promote the implementation of essential management practices to improve wildlife habitat.

Failure to pass this farm bill conference report would cause a great deal of confusion and economic hardship for many of our Nation's farmers. This outcome will not be acceptable for farmers, consumers or taxpayers. Our farmers are ready to go to work now, but they need to know what the programs are going to be so they can make rational and thoughtful decisions. The Government's role in providing stability and an orderly transition to a market economy in agriculture is very important, and our commitment to this goal can be seen in this farm bill conference report.

This farm bill ensures our commitment to protecting and building upon our public and private investments in agriculture and rural America. Mr. President, it is time to act and I urge my colleagues to support passage of the farm bill conference report.

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I point out that these Senators, Senator COVERDELL and Senator COCHRAN, are distinguished members of the Agriculture Committee and have contributed substantially to the legislation we have before the Senate.

I point out, Mr. President, that the CBO budget scoring for this farm bill for the conference agreement on H.R. 2854 comes in at a savings of \$2.143 billion under the December 1995 CBO baseline. I simply state that as a matter of fact, because there has been argument as to whether there is a budget implication. I am simply pointing out there is. It is down \$2.1 billion, and the baseline of December, 1995, as the Chair knows, is significant, because that came after this abundant year of good farm pricing that we have had.

Those farm prices meant a savings to the taxpayers of about \$8 billion. If we had been scoring this, as the Chair

knows from his service on the Budget Committee—and on this very subject, he authored legislation to try to make certain savings at least were reasonable—as I calculate it, the savings during the year through the market were about \$8 billion, and \$2 billion more is going to occur in this 7 years. That is substantial change in terms of the budget of the United States. I think that is important to introduce.

Mr. EXON. I yield myself off the time of the minority leader.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. EXON. Mr. President, I think the Senator from Indiana knows my high respect for him. We have worked together on many occasions over the years. I happen to think that he was one of the better qualified Republican candidates for President of the United States, and I saw the gentlemanly type of campaign that he ran. I was rather surprised that he did not catch on more than he did, but then, gentlemen do not always win.

We are at odds under the present bill. My point is, I want to drive it home once again, the Senator from Indiana indicated that the Agriculture Committee will monitor and look at this program as we go down the road. My point is—and I might be wrong, and I hope I am—but the farm program that is initiated with this freedom-to-farm act and the transition payments that go therewith, will so poison the well that even if the Agriculture Committee of the House and Senate think changes should be made, the public mood at that time will be to say, "What are you telling us? You have been giving this money away, chunks of billions of dollars, whether corn is \$3 a bushel or \$4 a bushel, and now you want to change it."

The main difference of opinion on this whole matter between the Senator from Indiana, my friend, and myself is that I do not think the concept that he is outlining, while it sounds like a better scenario to me than what this bill is intending to do, I am simply afraid there will not be the votes in the Senate or the House to make changes that the Senator from Indiana has at least indicated might be made and might be recommended at some further date. That is the crux, I think, of the difference between the point of view being expressed by the Senator from Indiana and the Senator from Nebraska.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I ask for the amount of time that remains under the control of the three Senators.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana controls 84 minutes; the Democratic leader controls 138 minutes; and Senator LEAHY from Vermont controls 60 minutes.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LUGAR. I ask that there now be a period for the transaction of routine

morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each.

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

HOW MUCH FOREIGN OIL IS CONSUMED BY UNITED STATES? HERE'S WEEKLY BOX SCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, the American Petroleum Institute reports that, for the week ending March 22, the U.S. imported 6,594,000 barrels of oil each day, 347,000 barrels more than the 6,247,000 barrels imported during the same period a year ago.

Americans now rely on foreign oil for more than 50 percent of their needs, and there is no sign that this upward trend will abate. Before the Persian Gulf war, the United States obtained about 45 percent of its oil supply from foreign countries. During the Arab oil embargo in the 1970's, foreign oil accounted for only 35 percent of America's oil supply.

Anybody else interested in restoring domestic production of oil—by U.S. producers using American workers? Politicians had better ponder the economic calamity that will occur in America if and when foreign producers shut off our supply, or double the already enormous cost of imported oil flowing into the U.S.—now 6,594,000 barrels a day.

THE BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, March 26, 1996, the Federal debt stood at \$5,066,587,916,694.66.

On a per capita basis, every man, woman, and child in America owes \$19,154.54 as his or her share of that debt.

PROPANE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH ACT

Mr. FAIRCLOTH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak on behalf of the Propane Education and Research Act.

Mr. President, North Carolina depends heavily on the use of propane as an energy source. As a matter of fact, our State ranks as the sixth largest consumer of propane fuel in the country—consuming over 500 million gallons in 1994 alone.

Propane is a low-cost energy source. For this reason, residential and farm use is abundant throughout our State.

The propane industry has recognized that consumption is on a steady rise. To respond to the increased demand on the industry, producers and marketers have recognized a real need to launch a research and development program of their own. They know that a strong research and development program would increase the safety of propane, create greater efficiency in its use, and assist them in exploring the endless opportunities of new usages.

But to truly understand propane, you must take a hard look at the makeup of the industry. The industry is only 165 producers strong with about 5,000 retail marketers. The resources necessary to implement a strong research and development program for this industry are limited.

That's where the Propane Education and Efficiency Act comes into focus. PERA provides the propane industry an opportunity to establish a checkoff program that would collect one-tenth of one cent per gallon of the wholesale cost of propane. The proceeds would go toward a fund designed for research and development, education and safety.

Propane is the only energy source that is not supported by Federal research dollars. This industry-financed program gives an industry with limited resources the opportunity to enhance their product without coming to the Federal trough for help.

I commend the leadership of propane industry in North Carolina and the Nation as a whole for recognizing their needs and taking the initiative to find a solution that will work without an increased burden on taxpayers.

As an original cosponsor of this bill, I thank Senator DOMENICI for his willingness to introduce this important piece of legislation. I stand ready to assist my good friend from Arizona in any way to see that this bill moves forward.

I thank the Chair.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, as chairman of the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, and as a proud Virginian, it is my pleasure to commend a fellow Virginian, Mr. John Kluge of Charlottesville, VA, for his contribution to the Library of Congress.

Born in Chemnitz, Germany, Mr. Kluge came to America when he was 8 years old and has become one of the Nation's most successful and highly regarded businessmen and one of its most generous humanitarians.

In 1990, John Kluge became the first chairman of the James Madison Council of the Library of Congress. The Madison Council, the Library's first private-sector support group in its 190-year history, plays a vital role in raising the visibility of the Library and promoting awareness and use of its collections. Its members include leaders in business, society, and philanthropy from across the Nation who are known for their commitment to education and scholarship. In its short history the Madison Council has funded over 50 programs, including fellowships for young scholars, publications and television programs, public exhibitions, scholarly conferences, centers of excellence that draw top thinkers to the Library to use and enhance its collections, a special acquisitions fund, and much more. Just recently, the council reached its goal of 100 founding members, set by John Kluge 6 years ago.

John Kluge has been the foremost private donor in the Library's history,

personally giving nearly \$8 million to the Library. His biggest single contribution was \$5 million for the National Digital Library, which is the brainchild of the Librarian of Congress, James Billington. Launched in 1994 with commitments of support from the Congress and private donors like Mr. Kluge, the National Digital Library is providing free unique content for the information superhighway opening new gateways to education for all Americans. Other projects to which John Kluge has contributed generously include the magnificent Vatican Library exhibition, the Leadership Development Program, an exhibition of heretofore unseen documents from the Soviet state archives, and purchase of a major collection of sound recordings.

By personally working on behalf of the Library of Congress, arranging meetings with potential supporters, giving of his own personal time, and bringing together an outstanding group of distinguished individuals who truly care about their national library and support it with their time, ideas, and financial contributions, John Kluge has made the Madison Council what it is today—a model of how the private sector can focus its resources within a public institution and make an important difference.

Because of John Kluge, millions more Americans know about our Nation's great Library which Congress has built and supported for almost 200 years, and they understand its importance in the history of our Nation.

John Kluge is one of the great philanthropists in America today. His contributions to the Library of Congress and the Nation have been immense. It is my privilege to commend him for his achievements.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. SARBANES. Mr. President, I rise today to express my strong disappointment that the Republican leadership will not allow a straight up-or-down vote on legislation to increase the Federal minimum wage. The Congress is long overdue in acting upon legislation which would establish a more realistic wage standard for the American worker and I would hope that the Senate has the opportunity to express its will on this matter—one so critical to working families—in the near future.

It would seem to me that the issue is a relatively simple one. As many of my colleagues will recall, under the Bush administration, the Senate voted overwhelmingly to enact an increase similar to the one being proposed today. In 1989, by a vote of 89-8, the Senate approved legislation which raised the minimum wage by 45 cents in 1990 and again in 1991 to bring it to its current level of \$4.25 per hour. The proposal being put forth by myself and others would enact the same increase—45 cents this year and another 45 cents in 1997—raising the minimum wage to \$5.15. It is my strongly held view that

such an action, like that taken in the 101st Congress, would appropriately reflect the values and beliefs at the very core of our society—the idea that if you work hard and play by the rules, you deserve the opportunity to get ahead.

In my own State of Maryland, the city of Baltimore has been at the forefront of efforts to assure hard-working Marylanders receive a decent living wage. Just last year, Baltimore's Mayor Kurt Schmoke signed the Nation's first prevailing wage law which stipulates that all new or renegotiated contracts with the city of Baltimore must provide a minimum wage of at least \$6.10 per hour. Baltimore's ground-breaking public policy initiative should serve as an example to cities across the Nation and, in my view, provides an ideal model for the U.S. Congress.

As we all well know, the real value of the minimum wage has deteriorated markedly since 1979. At its current level of \$4.25 per hour, the minimum wage will fall to its lowest real value in 40 years if Congress fails to take action. In the late 1950's the real value of the minimum wage was worth more than \$5 per hour by today's standards and in the mid-1960's it peaked at \$6.28. However, Congress' failure to respond to inflation over the past 20 years has resulted in a 27-percent decline in the real value of the minimum wage since 1979 and a 50-cent drop since 1991. Since April 1991, the cost of living has risen 11 percent while the minimum wage has remained constant at \$4.25.

The decrease in the value of the minimum wage has served to widen the gulf between the wealthiest and the poorest of our society. In an effort to offset this decline, I strongly supported President Clinton's expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit [EITC] which raised the income of 15 million households—helping many rise above the poverty line. However, this is not enough. Even with the EITC expansion, a family of three with one full-time wage earner working year round at the current minimum wage brings home \$8,500 and could receive a tax credit of \$3,400 for a total annual income of \$11,900. According to the Congressional Budget Office [CBO], the poverty level for a family of three in the United States stands at approximately \$12,557. Therefore, at the current minimum wage, workers can work full-time for an entire year, qualify for the EITC and still fall some \$657 below the poverty line. While the EITC is a critically important public policy initiative to assist low-income families, it should not be viewed as a substitute for a consistent, decent wage.

Opponents of increasing the minimum wage frequently argue that the typical minimum wage earner is a teenager simply working after school or on the weekends to earn a little extra spending money and that the Government should not be supplementing the incomes of this