

Act of 1949, second, we can pass a stand-alone farm bill, as we should have done in the first session, or third, we can pass an extension of the 1990 farm bill, thus providing rural America with much needed certainty and allow Congress more time to write a farm bill this year.

If Congress does not act, then the Secretary of Agriculture will have to exercise his responsibility to implement the Agriculture Act of 1949. Currently, market prices for wheat, corn, feed grains, and cotton are at all-time highs. However, under the 1949 act, the Secretary will be forced to implement parity prices for wheat, corn, and feed grains. For instance, wheat prices which are currently trading at \$4.92 per bushel, the support price would jump to \$7.82 a bushel. For corn, which is trading at \$3.60 per bushel, the parity price could go as high as \$5.30 per bushel.

Alabama's primary crops do not include wheat or corn. However, if parity prices are implemented, Alabama and the whole Nation will also be greatly effected. Alabama is one of the leading States in poultry and catfish production. With corn and feed grain prices potentially rising as high as they are projected, it will have the effect of sending livestock feed prices through the roof. Also at stake in Alabama are dairy, beef cattle, and hog producers who will be forced to pay higher prices for their feed. This increasing cost of production does not stop with the producers. Consumers will shortly feel the effect of the failure to pass a farm bill in the form of much higher beef, poultry, pork, and fish prices at the supermarket. These examples do not even address the effects that the 1949 act and parity prices will have on the Federal Treasury. As a result, I do not support this course of action, despite its very real possibility given Secretary of Agriculture hands being tied.

The second option that we have before us, is to pass a stand-alone farm bill. I am still puzzled as to why we did not pursue this course of action this time last year, rather than allowing farm policy to become embroiled in the budget reconciliation bill. I, along with my Democratic colleagues have sent a letter to the majority leader, Senator DOLE, requesting that farm policy come to the floor and be debated on its own merits so that we can pass a farm bill without getting caught in the web of budget politics. I have long stated that I believe that the current structure of farm programs have served rural America, and consumers everywhere, extremely well. Therefore, it is my belief that farm programs should only be finely tuned. I do recognize that some of my less fortunate regional colleagues feel that farm programs that effect their States need greater changes than those that effect the South. The ability to resolve these differences is the purpose of debate on farm programs, which to this point there has been very little in com-

mittee, and virtually none by the full Senate. Therefore, I recommend that we return to committee and discuss the farm bill as we always have in the past. We would then be able to bring a bill to the floor that addresses all of our needs and concerns, and pass a bill that serves our agricultural producers, rural America, and consumers alike.

The budget reconciliation bill contained agriculture provisions. However, the provisions contained in the reconciliation bill were never debated in committee, were not passed as part of the Senate reconciliation bill, but instead were approved in conference. Furthermore, the provisions known as freedom to farm, that ultimately ended up in the reconciliation bill, were defeated in the House Agriculture Committee.

I believe that the provisions of the so-called freedom to farm bill are seriously flawed. The freedom to farm bill makes guaranteed payments to farmers whether they produce a crop or not. The freedom to farm bill offers producers a bonus check in times of high market prices, and then is not sufficient in times of low market prices. It is unconscionable to make payments to producers in times of high market prices, such as we are currently experiencing, when at the same time, we are reducing school lunches and other essential nutrition programs. Essentially, the freedom to farm bill as a phase-out of farm programs. By repealing the permanent authority for farm programs, the freedom to farm bill ends all farm programs after 7 years.

I strongly believe that the core component of sound farm policy should be an adequate and certain safety net, one that provides support when market prices are low, and one that does not need to make payments when the market is up. This is how current farm programs are structured, and they work. For evidence of this, we need look no further than the recent CBO adjustment of its agriculture baseline. The CBO, after analyzing what they believe to be the future trend in agriculture prices, has determined that they expect commodity prices to remain high for at the least the next few years. As a result, the CBO has adjusted its baseline downward by \$8 billion. I believe that this is evidence that farm programs work as they are designed to: provide support at times of need, and no support when it is not warranted.

Therefore, while there may be an effort to resurrect the freedom to farm bill, I believe the policy contained within is inherently flawed. However, a full and open debate on farm policy will allow us to debate, consider and resolve these outstanding issues pertaining to the farm bill. This is the course of action that I strongly support.

To this point in time, however, we have not been allowed to debate farm policy. Yet, farmers do not stop when the Government shuts down; they rely more heavily on Mother Nature's time-

tables than they do Congress' continuing resolutions. However, despite the failure to pass a farm bill, farmers must continue to prepare for the upcoming planting season. Farmers, bankers, and other support industry such as fertilizer and seed suppliers, farm implement dealers, and processors must have some certainty as to the laws that they will be farming under.

In the event that we are not allowed to consider and implement a farm bill this year, and time is quickly running out, I then support the third course of action that Congress has before it: a 1-year extension of current farm policy. Extending farm programs for a period of 1 year will give rural America the much needed certainty that it deserves and allow time for Congress to act responsibly and write a farm bill this year. It is the responsibility of this Congress to let America's agriculture producers know what the program is for 1996, and we must not delay action.

Cotton and peanut producers in my State of Alabama can take comfort in knowing that they will not be held hostage to the ongoing budget negotiations and Government shutdowns. The cotton and peanut programs were extended for the 1996 and 1997 crops. While I support some fine-tuning of these programs, these commodity programs will work essentially the same as they have over the past 5 years. This is certainty that producers can take to the bank. Now, all producers should quickly be given the same measure of certainty.

THE FARM BILL

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I want to visit about the agricultural issue, but I have two friends from agricultural States and members of the Agriculture Committee on the other side of the aisle. I am not here to counteract anything they have said. I want to make that very clear. I want to make it clear, though, that while there is from the other side of the aisle admonitions of what we ought to do to solve the agricultural bill problem that we have before us, there are other approaches that ought to be used.

I am here to advocate a position that is not favored on the other side of the aisle. I will also bring to the attention of the agricultural community, who is concerned about this issue, that yesterday the majority party of the U.S. Senate offered a unanimous-consent motion to bring up the very provisions that were in the Balanced Budget Act of 1995, which the President vetoed, and if he had not vetoed that, we would not have any commodity policy problems for this Congress to settle for the next 7 years. We would not be here today talking about what ought to be done for the 1996 crop year as we get up to the very planting deadlines that are so close and are probably already in place in the State of Alabama and other areas of the South.

Every farmer of the United States would know what the policy for the next 7 years would be if the President had not vetoed that bill. Every farmer would know the amount of money that would be spent on agriculture from the U.S. Treasury over the next 7 years—that would be \$43.5 billion—with \$6 billion being spent in 1996. Without this legislation this money will not be spent and if the proposals from the other side of the aisle were adopted, there would not be \$6 billion going into agriculture in 1996. So the certainty of the money going there, it seems to me, ought to be pretty enticing to everybody on the other side of the aisle to back our proposal, plus the fact that there would be certainty in agriculture policy for the next 7 years.

Somewhat unrelated to the immediate problem we have before us but directly related to the fact that the other side is, in a sense, rejecting \$6 billion going into agriculture in 1996 and rejecting the proposal of this side of the certainty of \$43.5 billion going into agriculture over the next 7 years is the fact that—this may not apply to my three friends who are sitting over there from agriculture states, there are some prominent people on the other side of the aisle who have voted against past farm bills because they did not put enough money into agriculture. I am speaking specifically of the 1990 farm bill and the 1985 farm bill.

How ironic that those very same people are going to oppose what we are trying to do because somehow it puts too much money into agriculture this crop year. Is that not ironic. People on the other side of the aisle who voted against the 1990 farm bill, the 1985 farm bill because it did not put enough money into agriculture, are objecting to Republican efforts that has a farm bill that would put \$6 billion into agriculture and a certainty of \$43.5 billion over the next 7 years. And \$43.5 billion might sound like a lot of money. But it is less than half what has been spent on agriculture in recent years. The farm bill is about the only program in the Balanced Budget Act of 1995 that actually was cut. Most of the other programs in that Balanced Budget Act were slowing the rate of growth.

I want to move on and say it would have also given—what we proposed to do yesterday, and the very same thing that the President vetoed in December would have set a policy that every farmer in America would have the opportunity to plant according to the marketplace, not according to policy decisions made in Washington. Furthermore, every acre would be planted. I think that is a sound agricultural policy, and it was rejected by the other side yesterday.

When we are up to these planting deadlines you may not get exactly what you want, I may not get exactly what I want, but let me say this: Every major farm organization in the United States supports the Freedom To Farm Act. Every major commodity group in

the United States supports what was in that bill. Yet there are some who would take the view that at this last minute that is not good enough for them. Or in some cases, ironically, it might be too much. But what is ironic about that, some of the very same people said in past years we were not doing enough for agriculture.

I will yield the floor, although I hope we can have some more discussion on this if the people want to discuss it. I think it is such an important issue that we have to proceed and we have to reach an agreement on this.

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I listened with interest to my colleague from Iowa and I want to make a couple of rejoinders and a couple of other additional comments.

I was on the floor yesterday, as a matter of fact. So, I well understand what happened yesterday. The Senator from Idaho brought a bill to the floor by unanimous consent to take the so-called Freedom To Farm Act out of the budget reconciliation bill and deem it passed by itself on the floor. I objected to that.

I then offered a unanimous-consent request on the floor to take the piece of legislation I had introduced extending the current farm program for 1 year. It would also provide enormous planting flexibility so farmers can plant any crop within their base acres, and provide some forgiveness of the advance deficiency agreement. And, the majority party objected to that.

Then the majority party, by the Senator from Idaho, offered a unanimous-consent request to abolish the 1949 Permanent Farm Act. I do not understand why the majority party would put itself in a position of coming to the floor of the Senate to say "We would like to go on record saying we want no farm policy." I puzzled over that last evening, wondering why would the majority party be out here with that message? Why would they say, "If we cannot get the Freedom To Farm Act, we want nothing. We want to abolish the 1949 act."

Then I offered a second unanimous-consent request in which I said, "Well, if you do not agree with extending the program for one year with the other provisions I included, then would you at least agree with forgiving the advance deficiency payments, because you said you agreed with that. I will make a unanimous-consent request that we bring that up and deem that to have passed." The majority party objected to that. So that is what happened yesterday.

This is not just a chapter. This is a novel. One has to read all the chapters to understand the story line of this novel. This is not, however, entertainment reading for farmers in our country.

We are at the end of January. Congress has a responsibility to have a

farm program and we do not have one. Some might say, "Well, you do not have one because you would not swallow what we tried to shove down somebody's throat." I heard from others yesterday, "Well, gee, nobody tried to shove anything down anybody's throat."

The Senator from Alabama is on the committee. There was not a markup in which there was full discussion. We should have all reasoned together in a bipartisan way the way we have always done it on a 5-year farm bill. There was none of that.

There was not a bipartisan approach to a farm bill. It was, "Here it is, swallow it or leave it. And, by the way, we will put it into the budget reconciliation bill for the first time in history." We have never done that before. The strategy was, "That is where we will put it and we know the President will veto the bill. Then after he vetoes it we will feign surprise that we do not have a farm policy."

I am puzzled. We must on every day in every way decide to give farmers an answer. What will the policy be? We must find a way to agree on common elements. I think there are areas where we have common agreement. We agree with substantial flexibility. We agree on that. There are a number of areas we agree. Forgiveness on some of the advance deficiencies.

Farmers do not have the luxury of saying, "It is spring. The sun is shining. We have just had some rain but I decided to defer my planting until July."

Congress ought not have the luxury of deciding it can wait until Friday, the next Friday, or the next spring to decide what the farm policy ought to be. If farmers do not have the luxury not to plant or harvest, we ought not have the luxury to decide not to give farmers an answer of what the farm policy ought to be in this country.

We have a responsibility to pass a 5-year farm plan. It has not been done. Somebody said, "Well, but we did it." Yes, it was stuck into a reconciliation bill. But, the fact is it did not get passed. Everybody knew it would not get signed by the President and so we are left with nothing.

It seems to me we have a responsibility now to make something out of this mess. All of us from farm country need to come together here. This is not a joke or a laughing matter or amusing to any farmer in this country. They want to know under what conditions will they plant this spring.

Farmers face twin risks of planting a seed, not knowing whether it will grow, and then, if it grows, not knowing whether there will be a price at the marketplace. Family size farms wash away when international prices go down and stay down. That is why we have a safety net. That safety net is what we should be debating here in this Congress. Farmers deserve an answer, and we are going to keep pushing day after day to give them an answer.