

a gas tax reduction and have some people talk to the experts, here is what you find.

This is yesterday's paper: "Experts say gas tax cut wouldn't reach the pumps. Oil industry called unlikely to pass savings on to consumers."

Energy expert Philip Verleger says:

The Republican-sponsored solution to the current fuels problem . . . is nothing more and nothing less than a refiners' benefit bill. . . . It will transfer upwards of \$3 billion from the U.S. Treasury to the pockets of refiners and gasoline marketers.

The chairman of ARCO company says:

My concern is, quite frankly, how the public will react to what the Senate does.

He said:

Some Democrats have already said 'before we pass the gas tax, we want to make sure we see it at the pump.'

He said:

I'll tell you, market forces are going to outstrip the 4 cents a gallon. You're not going to be able to find a direct relationship between moving that and 4 cents. Then prices could go up, go down, could stay the same, and there you have the question of how the public is going to perceive that.

The majority leader's aides in the paper today said they had:

. . . received assurances from the oil companies that the full extent of any cut in the gas tax will be passed on to consumers.

However, officials at several major oil companies said yesterday that no such assurances had been or could be given.

"Even asking for them represented a mistaken return to direct government involvement in setting prices," several energy experts said. . . .

Bruce Tackett, a spokesman for Exxon Co. USA in Houston, said, "We have not made any commitments to anyone 'regarding a future' price. Not only have we not made a commitment, we can't. In a competitive market, the market will set the price."

An Amoco Corp. spokesperson said:

We've received no official request, and we haven't spoken to anyone about this.

Mobil Corp. said:

Mobil doesn't believe that a reduction in the tax will automatically mean a reduction in the pump price. . . . In the end, it will be the marketplace that sets the price at the pump.

The point is this gas tax reduction sounds like an interesting thing, but if you take \$3 billion out of the Federal Government and increase the deficit, which you will do—I think the so-called offset is a sham—but increase the Federal deficit, take \$3 billion, put it in the pockets of the oil industry and the drivers are still going up to the same pumps paying the same price for their gas, who is better off? The taxpayer? No. Is the Federal deficit better off? No, that is higher. The oil industry is better off.

I guess my hope is that we will decide for a change here in the U.S. Senate to do the right thing. The right thing, it seems to me, is for us to proceed on the agenda. Yes, the majority leader and the majority party have the majority, they have the right to proceed down the line on their agenda. We are 47

Members in the minority. We are not pieces of furniture. We are people that have an agenda we care deeply about. We also intend to exercise our right in the Senate to offer amendments and to try to affect the agenda of the Senate.

For those who say we have no right to offer amendments, that we will be thwarted in any attempt at all to offer our agenda, we say it will be an awfully long year because we intend to advance the issue of the minimum wage. The minimum wage ought to be adjusted. People at the top rung of the economic ladder have a 23-percent increase in the value of their salaries and their stock benefits last year; the people at the bottom of the economic ladder, those people out there working for minimum wage, have for 5 years not received a one-penny increase, and lost 50 cents of the value of their minimum wage. We are not asking to spike it way up. We are just asking for a reasonable, modest adjustment of the minimum wage. We ought to do that.

Gas tax, bring that to the debate. I do not intend to vote to reduce the gas tax. I would like to. I would like to see people pay less taxes in a range of areas, but I do not intend to vote to increase the Federal deficit. I have been one, along with others, who care and continue to ratchet that Federal deficit downward. I do not intend in any event to transfer money from the Federal Treasury, so the deficit increases, to the pockets of the oil industry, and leave drivers and taxpayers stranded high and dry.

The TEAM Act that has been introduced in the last day or so, bring that to the floor, entertain amendments, have a vote on that. That is the way the Senate ought to do its business. It is probably not the most politically adept way. It does not most easily advance an agenda of someone, but a way for the Senate to advance these issues, have a vote, and determine what the will of the Senate is.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. INHOFE). The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. BRYAN. I thank the Chair.

NUCLEAR WASTE

Mr. BRYAN. Mr. President, there has been, as my colleague from North Dakota has pointed out, a number of disappointments in terms of things that have reached the floor, and with the overhang of Presidential politics in this year. One of the most disturbing things to me is the power of special interests at work in this Congress and their effort to bring a piece of legislation to the floor, S. 1271, which we are told will reach the floor sometime in the next few weeks. That is the effort of a powerful lobby, well financed, very effective, the nuclear power lobby, to bring a proposal to locate an interim storage of high-level nuclear waste in my State of Nevada.

One can hardly open a newspaper or one of the many Capitol Hill news-

letters these days without seeing one of the nuclear power industry's many misleading, and in my view, intellectually dishonest advertisements urging Members of this body, of this Congress, to support S. 1271, which is the latest nuclear power industry's piece of legislation.

There are many things wrong with S. 1271, Mr. President. The obvious reason for my strong interest in the bill is an utter and complete disregard for the rights and interests of public health and safety of the men and women who I represent, my fellow Nevadans. Contrary to the wishes of the great majority of Nevadans—Democrats, Republicans, independents, those who choose no political affiliation—the overwhelming majority are strongly opposed to this so-called interim storage facility.

The problems with this legislation are more than a question of unfairness, which I will have occasion to speak to at some length during the debate on this issue. It is much more than unfairness, because most of the mistruths that are being spread about this legislation in the nuclear waste program in general affect not only my own State but many other States, as well.

First and foremost, I think it is important to emphasize that this piece of legislation is unnecessary. It is unnecessary. I have served in this body long enough to know that on many pieces of legislation, it is a very difficult balance. Some things that you like, some changes that you do not, there are some pluses and minuses. But always there should be at least some overriding necessity for that piece of legislation to be acted upon. In this instance, there is absolutely no need at all.

The scientific experts, experts independent of the nuclear power industry, independent of the environmental community, independent and in no way connected with my fellow constituents in Nevada, have concluded that there simply is no problem with leaving the high-level nuclear waste where it currently resides, and that is at the reactor sites. Most recently, the Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board, a Federal agency created by the Congress for the sole purpose of monitoring and commenting on the high-level nuclear waste program, that Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board recently stated, "There is no compelling technical or safety reason to move spent fuel to a centralized storage facility for the next few years."

Mr. President, that view has been endorsed by the Clinton administration as well because they can see through the transparency of the nuclear power industry's scare tactics. They have indicated that if this legislation should pass this Congress it will be vetoed.

Let me say for those who have watched this issue over the years, scare tactics have become the kind of conduct that we expect from the industry. More than a decade ago we were told

that without some type of interim storage, then called away-from-reactor storage, that nuclear reactors around America would have to close down. In fact, their prediction was by 1983, 13 years ago. Well, the Congress wisely rejected the overture by the nuclear power industry more than a decade ago, and not a single reactor has closed because of the absence of storage for the spent nuclear fuel rods.

It is, in my judgment, a wiser policy and a more sensible policy that we make a determination only after we have a judgment as to the location of a permanent repository. That is what the language currently says, Mr. President, that there will be no decision to force a State or any jurisdiction to accept an interim storage until after the permanent repository program has made its own judgment. That, Mr. President, has not yet been done.

This sensible approach, accepted by those who have independent judgment and are members of the scientific community, endorsed by this administration and by many others, does not satisfy the nuclear power industry. They are furious that their bluff has been called, that its scare tactics over the years have been sufficiently transparent, that most have been able to see through them, and they have been frustrated in their goal of establishing an interim storage facility.

The risk that would be created by caving in to these special interest demands are substantial. In addition to creating overwhelming risk for those of us in Nevada, particularly because of its geographical proximity to the metropolitan area of Las Vegas, which is now home to 1 million people, this legislation would result in over 16,000 shipments of dangerous high-level nuclear waste to 43 States.

Mr. President, I apologize to my colleagues and staff who are watching this issue and I apologize to America that we do not have the resources to have full-page ads in major newspapers across America and all of the various bulletins and pieces of literature issued covering and commenting on the operation of the Congress. I see the very able and distinguished Senator from Kansas, and I assure her I will not be long in my comments. I take the occasion to make her aware, as I do the distinguished occupant of the chair, we are talking about 43 different States that will be affected, 16,000 shipments. Much of that is located in the Midwest. The State of Kansas, if I might cite for my colleague's edification since she is on the floor, is a major transshipment corridor. The red indicates highway. The blue indicates rail. We have one, two, three, four major shipment routes to the State of Kansas, exposing communities—we will talk more about this when this issue comes to the floor—exposing communities to a great deal of risk if indeed an accident happens.

We all hope that an accident does not happen. But most pencils in America are still made with an eraser. Mistakes

occur—human error. We know that. Whether it is Three-Mile Island, Chernobyl, or whatever the nuclear disasters have been in recent years, there are human failures, mistakes, neglect, all of those things, and they are not likely to change as a result of anything that we have done or are likely to do on the floor of the Senate.

I know that the chairman of the Energy Committee spoke yesterday at some length about that. I can understand why he does not share the concerns. Alaska is not a transshipment corridor, so that none of his constituents would be exposed to the risk, as 43 States and some 50 million of us that live along one of these transportation routes might be affected.

I might say—and I believe the occupant of the chair served at the municipal level of government—there is no assurance in this legislation that any financial assistance is provided to communities who are placed at risk. None. No assurance whatsoever. So these communities exposed to this risk will have to bear that responsibility on their own.

Let me just say that for some of us—and the occupant of the chair and I are from two States that have no nuclear reactors at all; yet, we will bear the burden of those transshipments—all unnecessary, all unnecessary because our States will be affected. In the great State of Oklahoma, there are at least three rail shipment routes that will pass through that great State. I can cite State after State, and I will have occasion to do so later.

The chairman of the Energy Committee, in addressing this yesterday, tended to dismiss any concerns about safety. "Nothing to worry about. This is all under control." Mr. President, I have said many times on the floor that I was in the eighth grade in early 1951 when the first nuclear atmospheric test was conducted at Frenchman Flats in Nevada, about 60 to 70 miles from my hometown of Las Vegas. We were assured at the time, "There are no risks. There is nothing to worry about. The scientific community has this under control." Indeed, people were invited to go up to observe this great scientific phenomenon. Benches were established so you could go up, if you were part of the press corps. Those of us who were in school, as part of science programs, were invited to rise early in the morning and see the great flash from the nuclear detonation, see the cloud, and wait for the seismic shock to hit us, and calculate with some precision how far from ground zero we were from the place where the shot took place. Community reaction was overwhelming. Stores, retail establishments, all embraced this new nuclear phenomenon.

Well, it is now 45 years later. Nobody buys that argument anymore. No scientist worthy of his or her degree would ever suggest with absolute certainty that we can detonate a nuclear blast in a 70-mile range of a major community. Nobody will assert that.

Do you know what the consequences of that trust us is? Today, every Member of this Congress, every taxpayer in America is paying for those poor, innocent victims downwind of where those atmospheric shots occurred, who suffer from cancer and other genetic effects as a result of those experiments. Trust us, you need not worry. We are talking about something that is lethal. And those of us who would bear the burden of this do not have the same sense of safety and assurance that the chairman of the Energy Committee has.

Mr. President, I know that this debate has been framed largely as a result of the special interests of the nuclear power lobby. Many of my colleagues, I am sure, have not heard from their constituents. Today, I take the opportunity to acquaint Americans and my colleagues and staff, who are watching our discussion, that this is not just a Nevada issue. Obviously, we feel powerfully aggrieved at this outrageous conduct that suggests that not only are we to be studied for a permanent repository, but an interim facility will be placed there as well.

My point is that ours is a lonely voice, a small State of 1.6 million people and 4 Members of Congress. We cannot match the nuclear power industries' finances, the phalanx of lobbyists that they have from one end of Capitol Hill to the other. But there is much at risk. It is not just Nevada; it is 43 States, 50 million people. I urge my colleagues to get engaged in this debate and understand what is at risk.

I thank the Chair and the Senator from Kansas for allowing me to extend my remarks.

I yield the floor.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, a lot of folks don't have the slightest idea about the enormity of the Federal debt. Ever so often, I ask groups of friends, how many millions of dollars are there in a trillion? They think about it, voice some estimates, most of them wrong.

One thing they do know is that it was the U.S. Congress that ran up the enormous Federal debt that is now over \$5 trillion.

To be exact, as of the close of business yesterday, May 8, 1996, the total Federal debt—down to the penny—stood at \$5,094,597,203,341.08. Another sad statistic is that on a per capita basis, every man, woman, and child in America owes \$19,238.98.

So, Mr. President, how many million are there in a trillion? There are a million million in a trillion, which means that the Federal Government owes more than \$5 million million.

Sort of boggles the mind, doesn't it?

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.