

the Senate with the strong personal support of the President. But that was then, and now I guess his position has changed, based on this interview in the Washington Post. This is what Ann Devroy and John Harris reported in the Post interview:

On welfare reform, Clinton said he has not given up hope that a compromise bill acceptable to him will be approved this year. But he set a new price for his signature on a welfare system overhaul, asserting that the Senate proposal he indicated he would support last fall will have to be changed for him to support it now. He called on Republicans to send him a revised bill that would contain fewer cuts in funding for food stamps, provide child care for welfare recipients who work and preserve current protections for disabled children.

This is another example of the President's acknowledged skill at packaging and repackaging his positions, but it is a far cry from what was actually involved in the legislation that we considered.

The truth, as every Member of the Senate knows, is that the bill we passed last September was a compromise. A lot of work was put into that legislation by members of the committees involved, including the Senator from Connecticut, Senator DODD. That is why it gathered 87 votes on the Senate floor. It is why few Senators on both sides of the aisle opposed it.

The truth is that the Senate-passed bill did provide additional funding for child care for welfare recipients. It earmarked \$1 billion per year for child care assistance, and it provided another \$3 billion over the next 4 fiscal years for child care in certain States. In sum, that was a few billion more than what President Clinton had called for in his budget.

The truth is that the Senate-passed bill provided a base amount of \$16.8 billion in welfare funding in each of the next 5 years; an additional \$879 million for States with higher growth; a \$1.7 billion revolving fund for special borrowing; additional funds as incentive grants to States which make the most progress in getting persons off the welfare rolls; a \$800 million emergency assistance fund; a contingency fund of up to \$1 billion; \$150 million for second chance homes for unwed mothers and more.

The truth is that by returning control of public assistance to the States, the Senate-passed bill did not weaken protections for disabled children. On the contrary, 87 Members of the Senate, from both sides of the political aisle, voted to give flexibility to States in meeting the needs of those children.

The truth is that the Senate-passed bill required an 80-percent maintenance of effort—80-percent maintenance of effort—by the States to allay any fears that benefits to the needy might be recklessly reduced.

In fact, we made so many changes, we put in so much more money, that it was just marginally possible for this Senator to even vote for the bill. But it

was a compromise; it was a step in the right direction, and, like a lot of others on both sides, I went along with it.

But, based on what we are hearing from the administration, all that goes down the memory hole. The President is now upping the ante, demanding that the Congress give him a version of welfare reform not worthy of the name. His goal in doing so is obvious. Having campaigned on a promise to end welfare as we know it, he has done his utmost to end welfare reform as we know it, substituting in its place a gutted, toothless, costly sham.

As far as this Senator is concerned—and I am certain I speak for a number of other Members of Congress—that just cannot happen. We are not going to betray our promise to the American people in order to get the President's signature on a welfare bill.

There is nothing worse than for Congress to say, as we have too many times in the past, that we have accomplished something with a bill, giving it a glorious sounding title, when there is no substance to it—and when there will be no glorious results when it is actually implemented.

There are some things worse than no welfare reform. Phony reform is the main one. A welfare bill that leaves AFDC as an entitlement is phony reform. A welfare bill that keeps control of welfare in Washington in the Federal bureaucracy, in my opinion, is phony reform. A welfare bill that makes dependency more attractive by providing more benefits to more people is not genuine reform.

The President's latest comments on this subject present us with a stark choice between false reforms, misleading action, and nothing at all. He is probably hoping that, rather than return to the voters empty-handed, we will collude with him to give the public the appearance of reform, that we all declare victory, and it will be years before the taxpayers figure out they have been duped by what is called welfare reform.

I do not believe the majority in Congress is going to play that game. We are not going to break faith with the American people on this issue. If welfare reform has to wait until next year, I guess it will be worth the wait. If welfare reform must wait until the veto pen has been removed from the President, then so be it. But that delay is not necessary.

We can get genuine welfare reform. It can be one that will be supported in a bipartisan way, and it can be one that will be good for the people who now depend on the system and are looking for a way out. But that will take real cooperation. We must make sure that whatever we do is genuine reform that will produce the results we promised. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

AGRICULTURAL MARKET TRANSITION ACT OF 1996

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DEWINE). Under the previous order, the

Senate will now resume consideration of S. 1541, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1541) to extend, reform, and improve agricultural commodity, trade, conservation, and other programs, and for other purposes.

The Senate resumed consideration of the bill.

Pending:
Craig (for Leahy-Lugar) amendment No. 3184, in the nature of a substitute.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time for debate is equally divided between now and 11:25.

Mr. LUGAR addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I yield myself as much time as I may require.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, in beginning debate on S. 1541, the farm bill, let me just say that it is very important to farmers all over the country who have been notifying Senators and Members of the House that they want, certainly, a degree of certainty before they get into the fields to plant.

They would like, as a matter of fact, to see the Congress at work on this vital legislation. In response to that, the distinguished majority leader has, in fact, called us to that cause today, as Senators are aware.

This is a very important day. It is extraordinarily important legislation for all of America. Farmers want to know what is going to happen now. Hopefully, the Senate will provide that guidance through constructive action to completion and passage of this legislation today.

Over a year ago, at the beginning of the 1995—and now 1996—farm bill debate, I posed 53 questions about future agricultural policy in this country. The answers to those questions made it clear that a status quo farm policy was not a good idea. S. 1541, the legislation before us today, represents a bold new direction. It answers the 53 questions that I asked and that other Senators posed in a broad review of farm policy in this country.

There were five basic reasons to support Senate bill 1541.

First of all, a good reason to support it is its simplicity of approach. Traditional farm policy is so arcane that even many U.S. Department of Agriculture officials can barely comprehend all of its complexity. The bill we consider today offers a straightforward, commonsense policy.

Second, the bill offers certainty. Farmers who sign contracts will know their future payments for the next 7 years. Taxpayers, importantly, will know precisely what money is going to be spent during the next 7 years and that the budget savings we have already debated in this Chamber are certain.

That is especially important, Mr. President, because as you will recall,

we debated a farm bill that has just expired, estimating that the taxpayers' expense would be about \$41 billion. In fact, the final cost of the bill was close to \$57 billion due to all the contingencies, including the weather and foreign trade and demand. In this particular instance it was important for those of us who favor a balanced budget approach to know precisely how much was for agriculture, and for farmers to know precisely the payments that would come to them.

Third, the bill does provide very substantial savings for taxpayers. With this bill, agriculture has done its part to help balance the Federal budget in 7 years. Senate bill 1541 will reduce Federal spending by about \$4.6 billion over the 7 years from a new baseline which reflects actual market prices in this country.

I might add, Mr. President, that baseline recognizes that outlays, as expenditures by taxpayers, to the farm community will be \$7 to \$8 billion less than earlier anticipated largely because market prices for many of the farm programs are very high this year and, therefore, the normal deficiency payments do not kick in under those formulas.

The fourth reason for supporting this legislation is its market orientation. Farmers' payments will be the same even if they plant alternate crops. As a matter of fact, they will make planting decisions based on market forces, on the signs of prices in the market. Today planting decisions affect eligibility for Government payments, and subsidies have driven much of the business planning of many farmers.

Under Senate bill 1541, farmers will have full planting freedom, thus, the label given to this act, the "freedom to farm," the ability to manage your land, to make decisions for the market. We will end, in fact, Federal Government production controls. That is an important step forward all by itself.

A fifth reason for support is that farmers support Senate bill 1541. This long-term plan for U.S. agriculture has been endorsed by a wide range of farm groups. National groups such as the American Farm Bureau and the National Corn Growers and State groups such as the Kansas Wheat Growers and the North Dakota Grain Growers have given strong endorsement to this legislation.

Mr. President, the Senate has approved this bill once already as a part of the Balanced Budget Act. Unfortunately for our Nation, the President vetoed that act and thus vetoed the farm bill. That veto creates a problem for U.S. agriculture. Since commodity support programs were a part of the Balanced Budget Act, we are left with no workable farm program for many crops, except for the outdated 1949 and 1938 laws, which could cause price supports. For wheat, for example, for those farmers who had allotments in that period of time almost 50 years ago, those price supports could triple.

Now the Clinton administration confirms that implementing these old statutes, the 1949 and the 1938 acts, could add \$10 to \$12 billion to the cost of running farm programs for the 1996 crops alone. That is clearly intolerable. We have talked, Mr. President, about savings as a part of the Balanced Budget Act. Failure to enact this legislation could mean that \$10 to \$12 billion in only 1 year alone would be added to the deficit.

It is clear, Mr. President, that the Congress and the President will be ridiculed by the public for gridlock, for inactivity, for myopia, given the apparent crisis that lies immediately ahead of us. The new bill must be fiscally responsible.

Proposals to raise loan rates, as some of our colleagues want to do, potentially is a very expensive option. And some of our colleagues have charged, in fact, that we have delayed writing a farm bill and that the Senate bill 1541 was written without full participation, without hearings.

Mr. President, Congress did produce a farm bill. It passed two Houses and went as a part of the Balanced Budget Act to the President. President Clinton vetoed it, and only that veto has prevented timely passage of new farm laws.

Second, the Senate Agriculture Committee held thorough hearings. The committee held 15 farm bill hearings in 1995 involving 157 witnesses from all over our country. Additional and lengthy hearings were held on farm legislation in the Budget Committee. Every conceivable approach to farm policy was discussed in those hearings.

Much of the farm bill has, in fact, been developed in a bipartisan way. In July 1995, the Agriculture Committee of the Senate gave preliminary, but unanimous, approval to four titles of the farm bill. They cover trade, farm credit, research, and rural development. Since then, there have been further bipartisan efforts on a miscellaneous title and a conservation title.

Some of our colleagues have declined to be involved in the balanced budget amendment consideration. They informed us in the Agriculture Committee that they would not vote for the cuts required by the Balanced Budget Act. We were told that we would have to pass that act with Republican votes alone in the committee, and we did so. If some colleagues feel left out at this point, it is because they chose to be left out. They were within their rights to take that option, but it is strange now to hear complaints about a process that included 15 full hearings and very thorough debate before passage of the farm bill from the Senate Agriculture Committee.

I suspect the real complaint is with the substance of the bill. It calls for the end of Government planting controls. It calls for freedom to farm. It provides an entirely new outlook for American agriculture, which I find very exciting as a farmer, as somebody

who has walked through this legislation not only as a legislator but as one who is subject to it.

I will say, Mr. President, parenthetically, with the exception of the distinguished Senator from Iowa, Senator GRASSLEY, I am the only farmer on the committee, the only one that might be visibly affected by this legislation and have some idea of how it actually works. So from that standpoint, I have a sense of liberation about the process, which is shared, I might say, by farmers in the State of Ohio, the State of the distinguished Chair, and Indiana, and, in large number, farmers in Iowa, whom I have been visiting the last 2 days. They want action, and that is why I am here as opposed to staying another day with friends in Iowa with whom I have been visiting.

Fundamentally, a few of our colleagues do not want to reduce spending on farm programs. That is their privilege, but most of us believe they are mistaken. Most farmers know that they, as well as other Americans, will benefit from a balanced budget. They know as well that our Nation will be stronger for that, and they know that S. 1541 defines exactly what the farm commitment is, and it is an acceptable commitment to farm groups.

Therefore, Mr. President, S. 1541 is a bold departure from the past. It is clearly a new direction. It will reduce Federal spending and Federal deficits with certainty. It will reform farm programs and give them both certainty and much greater simplicity, and it will prepare U.S. agriculture for what promises to be a very exciting new century.

One of the great ironies of consideration of farm legislation during the past year is that initially we talked in terms of Federal programs very similar to the ones which we now have. As the Chair knows, for the large program crops—corn, wheat, cotton, and rice—target prices are established. If the market prices are below those target prices, farmers may receive deficiency payments, the difference between the two, the target price and the market price, for the crop history on the covered acreage they have in the plan for which they have signed. These are the so-called deficiency payments. Others would call them subsidies. They have mounted up to very large totals in some years.

In this particular year of the farm bill, suddenly, export demand took off in a very dynamic way. The Chinese changed from becoming exporters to very strong importers. That provided new opportunities for the United States in Southeast Asia, but our traditional customers in Europe and in Japan come in for much stronger orders really across the border. Cattle feeders and hog producers throughout this country have continued to feed large herds of livestock and, despite the rising price of feed, have continued the size of those herds.

Mr. President, we have a situation unlike any that I have seen in agriculture in the last generation in which clearly the price in the market went way above the target price and remains there. If a farmer were to go into the futures market this morning and he was bold enough to know exactly what his crop was going to be for this year, the planting of 1996 or 1997, a farmer could sell both crops for prices higher than the target price for corn, for example. I addressed this issue, as I mentioned to the Chair a moment ago, in Iowa in the last few days, with farmers saying, "What should we do? How much fertilizer should we buy, or other inputs, for our crop?"

My advice has been to take a look at the markets, take a look at the futures prices. Note that we are going to have strong demand for corn, for wheat, for soybeans, and at least it would appear for cotton for some time to come. Freedom to farm means that, that you plant for the market. I would advise farmers to do that.

Farmers, being prudent people, say, "That is clearly the decision we are going to make anyway, but at the same time, we want to know what you legislators are going to do sort of post-mortem, after those decisions. If you come back then and say, 'We really didn't mean freedom to farm. As a matter of fact, we wanted the same old status quo legislation with all of the controls, the set-asides, the planting decisions made in Washington,' if, in fact, that is what happens weeks, months, years down the trail after gridlock finally is gone and polarization is less intense, what would be the penalties for us if, in fact, we made sound decisions for our farms and for our country, for the general export thrust of a country that exports a great deal more in agriculture than it imports and with a balance of payments that grows stronger every year?"

That is the fundamental question. It is not that farmers need market signals. They are there and abundantly clear what we ought to be doing. They are worried about being undercut by legislators who are not farmers, who really do not understand what is going on out there but purport to do so in behalf of farmers, and by a President who has apparently, through the Secretary of Agriculture, threatened to veto almost all legislation that bears some idea of freedom to farm.

So this is why we are having this debate today to bring some certainty to the field. We are having it in the context, as the Chair knows, as the distinguished Senator from Mississippi has already announced, that we are going to have a cloture vote at 1:30 p.m. Why would we already understand we are going to have a cloture vote? It is because the distinguished Democratic leader, in conversations with Senators, has indicated that there is strong opposition on his side of many Senators to this legislation, such strong opposition that it might lead to extended debate,

and, therefore, the cloture vote at 1:30 is very important.

If cloture is established, we are going to have farm legislation, probably today, but whenever the cloture procedure runs out. If we are not successful, as the Chair knows, another cloture vote will be held on freedom to farm, plus additional amendments that have been offered by the distinguished ranking member of the Agriculture Committee, Senator LEAHY. And, hopefully, we will bring debate to a conclusion in some orderly way on that proposition, in the event my legislation that I have introduced and am debating this morning should not pass.

In any event, this is a very important day for agriculture and for America. It is a privilege to lay before the Senate, I believe, remarkable legislation that I hope will find favor with the Senate today.

Mr. President, I yield the floor to the Senator from Mississippi, such a valued and important member of our committee and, in his own right, chairman of the Agriculture Subcommittee on Appropriations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair advises the Senator he has 3 minutes, 30 seconds remaining.

Mr. LUGAR. I yield the remaining time to my distinguished colleague.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I thank my distinguished friend, the chairman of the Agriculture Committee, for yielding to me. I urge the Senate to approve this Agricultural Market Transition Act. We are confronted with an emergency. It is essential that farmers know immediately what the farm programs for this crop year will be. Farmers are unable to make the decisions that must be made about what to plant or how much to plant, with the current uncertainty of this year's farm law.

If we fail to pass a new farm bill, wheat and feed grain farmers will be operating under the provisions of the 1938 and 1949 agricultural acts. There will be no rice program. This forces the Secretary of Agriculture to announce a new rice program under the authority he has under the 1948 Commodity Credit Corporation. And while cotton, peanut, and sugar titles of the previous farm bill would continue for the 1996 crop-year, a great deal of confusion and possible economic hardship for many of our Nation's farmers could result.

The Department of Agriculture has even suggested that this chaos could add \$10 to \$12 billion to the cost of farm programs this year. This is just not acceptable for either farmers or the taxpayers.

So I urge the Senate to act favorably on this cloture vote so we can have a vote on the bill, S. 1541, to continue the commitment to protecting public and private investments in production agriculture and in rural America.

I am pleased that the bill includes, with the support of the chairman, the

Marketing Loan Program that has proved so workable and helpful in the rice and cotton areas. There are also other provisions that have been tried and tested and proven to be helpful to your effort to compete effectively in the international marketplace with our strong agriculture sector.

Our farmers are ready to go to work, 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 will be carried forward and implemented in this bill. It does it fairly and with a clear-cut commitment to curb spending.

I urge my colleagues to vote for cloture so we can get a vote on this bill.

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. INHOFE). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I understand we are technically out of time on the farm bill, but I see no other Senators seeking the floor.

I ask unanimous consent that I be allotted the remaining time before the recess in order to make remarks about S. 1541, the farm legislation.

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

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I believe S. 1541, the underlying legislation, which is the subject of discussion in the cloture motions today, presents a very important opportunity for the Senate to move forward in a bipartisan way to shape policy in behalf of our Nation's farmers and consumers. This modified freedom-to-farm legislation offers reform, opportunity, flexibility and predictability in a fiscally responsible way and with the growing support of Members on both sides of the aisle and, I would say most important, growing support from the people in America who are looking to the Congress to tell them what the Federal farm policy will be.

All of us, as Senators, should understand that farmers need to know what the Federal policy will be. For better or worse, the Federal Government has been a very large part of decisions made by farmers in deciding what to plant, where to plant, and how to plant. We know that a new, long-term plan is far better than an extension of the current law. We know that if we do not move this legislation, the alternative is delay, confusion, frustration, continuation of current law, or perhaps even the reinstatement of long-outdated policies still on the books.

We also should know, based on the discussions that have gone on here, that there is only one vehicle that has

been under the light, has been scrutinized, has met the test, and can bring a legislative bipartisan consensus. Simply put, I find no constituency for continuing the status quo. We cannot leave the Federal farm programs in the quandary in which they now find themselves. Farmers do not want it. Fiscal conservatives do not want it. Reformers do not want it. Urban Members who have been critical of the current farm programs, certainly they should not want it.

This process is terribly difficult under normal circumstances, but it is especially difficult when working under balanced budget constraints. It is even more difficult when the comprehensive proposal which has survived this legislative marathon represents significant change because change produces political anxiety. There is no question that this will be a very difficult measure, but it has been through the process and it has reached a consensus that I believe is absolutely essential.

I offer my thanks and congratulations, on behalf of farmers in my State and all those of us who want to put this country on a path towards a balanced budget, to the distinguished majority leader, Senator DOLE, to Chairman LUGAR, to Senator GRASSLEY, particularly to Senator LEAHY, the ranking member on the agriculture authorizing committee, and the others who have worked under difficult circumstances to find a bipartisan consensus for which the Senate now has an opportunity to move, to a post-cloture scenario that can get a bill to the President's desk.

I know the majority leader and Chairman LUGAR and their staffs have labored tirelessly to find a bipartisan solution and I applaud them for taking decisive action to answer the pressing need to produce a farm bill for the future.

I regret that some remain opposed to this legislation. I believe that the stage was set during consideration of the budget resolution when Congress voted cuts—not disproportionate cuts—but real cuts nonetheless. At that time, I think some on the other side decided that the cuts were too great and that any program that carried these cuts would be opposed.

I want to warn anyone listening, if you find yourself confused, there may be ample reason. You may hear from some that this legislation cuts farming too much and that it simultaneously pays farmers too much under the fixed market transition payments. We may also hear from some who have historically opposed existing law that this reform legislation should be defeated to preserve existing law.

Mr. President, I am hearing from my farmers that they want modified freedom to farm, and they do not want an extension of current law. Let me address this notion that we are cutting agriculture too much and paying farmers too much. In my State, farm prices

may be better than they were last year, but to them, there is no way these prices are high. These prices are the same as they were 13 years ago while the cost of a pickup truck has doubled over that same period. "High prices" is a relative term. If you ask a rancher feeding steers corn—corn is high. If you ask a corn farmer, prices are not high—hardly enough to cover the costs of production. I read a wire story where Secretary Glickman observed from China that he was concerned that farmers will get a tremendous windfall.

I know the Secretary is doing marvelous work promoting trade and he should be applauded for that, but he would not want to sit down with farmers in my State and explain to them how this slimmed down program, combined with moderate prices is going to give them a windfall.

Additionally, prices may be higher than they were several years ago, but after this past year's flood, drought, and frost, many farmers had nothing or significantly less to sell. The existing program does not address that problem and this is a critically important point. You cannot tell my farmers who have little to sell while facing a refund of their advanced deficiency payments that the current program is a safety net and the modified freedom to farm is not.

I might also suggest to Members who are worried that farmers might get a payment when prices are higher than normal that farmers can allocate the money to prepare for the bad years—they do not need the Government to do it for them. I believe farmers can manage a predictable 7-year income stream to mitigate economic risk just as well or better than Washington can do it on their behalf. They can sock it away for the bad year, they can buy down their debt, they might buy a new used 15-year-old tractor to improve their efficiency.

Mr. President, I urge Members to take a look at this bill and recognize that it is an exciting new approach to the challenge of maintaining a healthy food-producing sector, promoting important environment practices, and doing so within the budget constraints that we are imposing on ourselves on behalf of future farmers who want our Nation to afford farm programs.

The first feature of this package is that it is responsible. As the other side has testified again and again, farmers were not exempt from the difficult choices necessary to balance a budget. Farmers have always been supportive of a balanced Federal budget and have proven their willingness to share in the sacrifice necessary to get there. Farmers are highly sensitive to the cost of capital and, according to FAPRI at the University of Missouri, stand to save over \$15 billion over the next 7 years if we achieve a balanced budget.

This package provides predictability. Farmers, bankers, and the taxpayers know how much this program will cost

over the next 7 years. It locks in spending to protect agriculture from the next round of budget cuts while simultaneously preventing the fluctuations that have shocked budgets in the past.

This package dramatically reduces burdensome paperwork and the perverse antimarket incentives that frustrate farmers who are aggressively competing for and securing growing international markets. Farmers would rather compete to feed Asia than protect their crop base necessary to maximize deficiency payments.

Simplicity, flexibility, predictability, and budgetary soundness are features—any one of which is a step forward in this debate—but together, they mark an historic effort to make the transition to the future.

Mr. President, I do not blame Members for being hesitant to embrace changes to a program that has lasted my lifetime. It was only after multiple meetings with farmers in my State that I was prepared to make this change. In this town, if one is in doubt, she or he is expected to stick with the status quo. But there are two things that have changed.

There is a recognition that the deficit must be addressed and farmers are ready to free themselves from the regulations of the current program.

There is one other observation I wish to share from my experience traveling in Missouri. As Senators know, the number of farmers is decreasing and the age of the average farmer is increasing. Most talented young rural people are moving to town. Of the young people who are endeavoring to be our next generation of farmers, there is a great optimism despite the difficulties in agriculture. These young farmers will tell you they want to farm for the market. They think the current system is old, outdated, complicated, frustrating, inflexible, bureaucratic, and costly. Our next generation of farmers tell me they want to turn the corner as we move into the next century and I think we owe these young farmers that opportunity.

Mr. President, this legislation has been out there since last summer and it was included in the Balanced Budget Act passed by Congress in November and vetoed by the President on December 6, 1996. It was carefully crafted after months of negotiations between House and Senate conferees. As all Members know, this was a difficult process and many delicate regional issues were addressed.

Since the veto, I know there have been bipartisan negotiations led by the distinguished majority leader, Chairman LUGAR, and Members on the other side. I must tell Senators, until the most recent bipartisan negotiations with Senator LEAHY, one of the more difficult press inquiries I have fielded is, "Who are the Republicans negotiating with?" I know that the distinguished minority leader introduced a bill on marketing loans and the House has a blue dog plan. The administration once hinted at 21 percent unpaid

flex but I see in a report off the wire that they now support a 2-year freedom to farm experiment and, here is the kicker, with dramatically reduced transition payments. I raise this point because there is simply no consensus alternative. There is, however, consensus in the agricultural community on this legislation and I believe it is time for us to join together to reflect that consensus.

Mr. President, we all share the goal of continuing to provide the safest, most abundant, and the most affordable supply of food and fiber in the world. I know there are some who may call this welfare. As farm State Senators know, we have argued until we are blue in the face that the current system is not welfare but people are not listening.

Farmers know it is not welfare and most Senators do not consider the existing program welfare, but try to pass that off on an editorial board or local chamber of commerce. You cannot argue that the reform program will be accused of welfare when the existing system is accused of welfare.

In my State, farmers are supportive. Over time, more and more of the commodity groups representing farmers have weighed in. Missouri's corn growers were in this week to request that freedom to farm be adopted and a continuation of current law be rejected. Farm Bureau is asking us to move this legislation. The underlying bill represents serious reform, it moves us in the right direction and is fiscally responsible. This is why it has been endorsed by: the U.S. Chamber of Commerce; Citizens Against Government Waste; representatives of the Heritage Foundation; Citizens for a Sound Economy; National Taxpayers Union, Americans for Tax Reform, Consumer Alert; the Cato Institute; and the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

I understand that change is not easy and I congratulate again the efforts of the majority leader, Chairman LUGAR, and the bipartisan negotiators who have been searching for a way to move this legislation forward and get farmers a program that moves them into the next century. I think the President will see that farmers and citizens will be best served if he adopts this legislation and I am hopeful that Congress can continue to work on sensible regulatory reform, capital gains and estate tax relief and other measures that will help our farmers compete in the next century. I urge adoption of the bipartisan compromise.

I urge my colleagues to invoke cloture. The farmers of America deserve better than to be filibustered into uncertainty for the rest of the spring. We need to move forward on this bill.

JOINT MEETING OF THE TWO HOUSES—ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now stand in recess and proceed to the House of Representatives for a joint meeting.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 11:27 a.m., recessed until 12:45 p.m., and the Senate, preceded by the Secretary of the Senate, Kelly D. Johnston; the Deputy Sergeant at Arms, Joyce McCluney; the Vice President of the United States; and the President pro tempore of the Senate, Mr. STROM THURMOND, proceeded to the Hall of the House of Representatives to hear the address by His Excellency Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic.

(The address delivered by the President of the French Republic to the joint meeting of the two Houses of Congress is printed in the Proceedings of the House of Representatives in today's RECORD.)

Thereupon, at 12:45 p.m., the Senate reassembled and was called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. COATS).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Presiding Officer, in his capacity as a Senator from Indiana, suggests the absence of a quorum. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

AGRICULTURAL MARKET TRANSITION ACT OF 1996

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, how many minutes are left on our side of the aisle on debate of the farm bill at this time?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There are 18 minutes 45 seconds remaining on the Republican side.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I yield myself 10 minutes. Before speaking, I ask unanimous consent that George Stickels, a fellow in my office, have access to the floor during the debate on the farm bill.

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

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, the issue before us is one of the utmost importance, the farm bill. We have to debate this now because, as everybody knows, the commodity provisions of the new farm bill were part of the Balanced Budget Act of 1995. That Budget Act was vetoed by the President. The farm bill provisions went down with that. We did not have the votes to overturn the President's veto on the Balanced Budget Act.

Consequently, the farmers of America do not know for the first time in 5 years, since we passed the 1990 farm bill, what the Government policy is toward agriculture. This is necessary information that must be factored in to a lot of business decisions that are made by farmers.

The legislation that is before us will guarantee an investment of \$6 billion in rural America this crop year, an investment in rural America at a time when there is a tremendous transition from the agriculture of the last half of the 20th century to the more free market, international-trade-oriented agriculture of the 21st century. When this transition is going on, this is when we need to bring some certainty to the business decisions of agriculture as best we can.

There has been some fault found, particularly on the other side of the aisle, with the fact that we might be spending \$6 billion in rural America as an investment when grain prices are high, even though there is not a profit in cattle, there is not a profit in livestock generally, particularly cattle and pigs, but right now there is some profit in grain.

Some people have said on the floor of this body that we are giving welfare to farmers at a time when there are high prices. The inclination is to say that there is too much money in this farm bill for agriculture. I have heard some of those same Members say that they could not vote for farm bills in the past because they did not do enough for agriculture. How ironic that we have the same people today suggesting that we might be passing a farm bill that is too good for agriculture. It just does not add up.

Not only does it guarantee an investment in agriculture of about \$43.5 billion over the next 7 years in this transition from a Government-controlled agriculture to a free market agriculture, but it goes from an agriculture system inclined toward domestic production for domestic consumption to a farm program for production to meet the competition and the demand of international trade. There is no more important time to do that.

Also, this legislation locks in the agricultural baseline and guarantees an investment in rural America of this \$43 billion. It is important to have that baseline out there because this legislation, like most legislation, does not provide for a farm program beyond the sunset year of 2002.

There will be plenty of time for Congress to enact legislation beyond that period of time. But if we are not careful, what we do today will preclude agriculture having a baseline, and then when we come up with a farm program beyond the year 2002, it may be impossible to raise the money for that baseline.

This bill before us locks in that baseline, guarantees payments to farmers and for other programs such as conservation programs and export programs. It provides a real safety net by