

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HARKIN. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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. HARKIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

FARM BILL

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, the Senate is in session at this late hour—we just finished the telecom bill, a very important bill for our country—but we are in session now because we do not have a farm bill.

I have been on the Agriculture Committee now for 22 years, 10 in the House, 12 in the Senate. I have seen a lot of farm bills. I have worked on a lot of farm bills. Some were contentious, some sort of passed easily. But in every instance—in every single instance—in the House and in the Senate, we worked diligently on both sides of the aisle to try to reach accommodations to get a farm bill through before the end of the year. In most cases, we got it through long before the end of the year.

But I remember some particular ones. I remember the 1981 farm bill when I was in the House. We passed it in the early morning hours of December 17. Why do I remember that? Because my daughter was born about 2 hours later, and I remember being on the floor trying to get the farm bill passed.

The reason I recall that, aside from the fact my daughter was born a couple of hours after we finished the farm bill, was that it was late in the year. It was 1981, a very contentious year in agriculture regarding what kind of farm policy we were going to develop under the leadership of the new administration that had taken over that year. But we got our work done, and we got the farm bill passed and down to the President before the end of the year.

That was with a Democratic House and a Republican Senate and a Republican President. We did not filibuster, we did not hold it up. We did our work, and we got it through before the end of the year.

The hue and cry that came from around the country was that we had waited too long. A lot of the finger pointing was at the Democrats, because we allegedly had waited too long and we did not get the bill through by the end of the year. But we got it through.

Now here we are in February of 1996, and we still do not have a farm bill for this year. I do not want to engage in finger pointing, but I do want to say at least that no Democrat on this side has filibustered a farm bill. We have not held it up.

We passed a farm bill out of the Ag Committee in late September. We could have brought it out on the floor in the month of October. We could have

brought it out in the month of November. We could have brought it out in the month of December. But, no, it was not brought up. No, instead, it was taken and put in the budget reconciliation bill so that we did not have an opportunity to really debate it and amend it and fashion a farm program for the future. The President vetoed that bill, as he should have.

So here we are in February, and once again, a farm bill was laid down yesterday. Immediately, a cloture motion was filed to cut off debate, to cut off amendments, to limit the time.

Well, I am not here to filibuster, but I do want some time to speak on the bill, to lay out what it would mean to farmers and rural communities in my State. I want some time to be able to offer amendments that I think are worthwhile. I may not win them, but at least I feel an obligation to my farmers in Iowa to try to craft and fashion a farm bill in their best interests.

Now I understand that at this late hour we are being told that the House is going to go out. The Senate wants to adjourn and come back at the end of February, and we have to pass a farm bill tonight, or we will not be able to get it done because the Senate is going to adjourn for another month. What kind of nonsense is that? We are elected to come here and get the people's legislation passed. I do not know of any compelling reason why we cannot bring the farm bill up, debate it tomorrow, or Saturday if need be. We do not need to be here Saturday; we can debate it Monday and Tuesday, and probably get it done by Tuesday night. At least everybody would have ample opportunity to speak, offer amendments, and have their amendments voted on. Then we can have a final vote on the passage of the bill and send it to conference.

Yet, somehow a gun is being held to our heads tonight, and we are told that if we do not rubberstamp some farm bill that has been crafted in the back rooms—and we do not even know what is in it—that we are going to be held to blame because a farm bill was not passed here on February 1. I am telling you, Mr. President, I find this whole process contrary to everything I believe in, in terms of a democratic Government, and in terms of what I believe in, in terms of the processes here of open and free debate, with amendments, and allowing us to state our case and to try to make the best case we can for our constituents.

So I am sorry, I am just not going to be a part of caving in and rubberstamping something simply because it is late, it is in February, and we have to get a farm bill passed. Our farmers need to know what to do. For Heaven's sake, they need to know what to do. But it was not this Senator, or any Senator on this side of the aisle, that kept the farm bill from coming to the floor in October, November, or December. That was not our call to make. It was not brought up on the floor. It should have been brought up. It should have been brought up in October. Then we could have finished our work and

sent it to conference. It may not have been what I wanted, but at least the process would have been fair and open and I could not complain.

I am complaining now because the process is not fair and it is not open. I intend to make it so. I will use whatever power I have as a Senator to make sure we have that kind of an open process here on the farm bill and not be asked to rubberstamp something when we do not even know what is in it.

But the people that are really suffering are our farmers, along with others involved in agriculture. My farmers in Iowa and throughout the Midwest right now have to make decisions, and they are doing it in the blind—what seed to buy, what to plant, how much credit do they need, how much fertilizer they need. How can they make those decisions when they do not even know what kind of farm program we have? They should have known this and could have known this in December or earlier. We could have had a farm bill passed in December. It may not have been what I would have liked, but at least the process could have been fair and open.

We owe it, I believe, to our farmers and rural communities to act in a deliberate manner. We have a 1990 farm bill that was crafted here in a bipartisan fashion. I was not one of those preferring to extend the 1990 farm bill, I must admit. But at this late hour, it seems almost inevitable that some type of extension is probably the most realistic thing we can do. We can make some changes, I believe, that both sides of the aisle would agree with, such as more planting flexibility and getting rid of base acreage restrictions. We could do that. Then farmers would at least have some idea what the rules are because they have already operated under the 1990 farm bill for the past 5 years. They would know what to expect, what to do, and there would be some certainty out there. Perhaps we would have to come back this year, or maybe even next year. Maybe we should extend it 2 years because it looks like this is going to be a short year with everybody out campaigning. Then maybe we can come back next year and craft a longer term farm bill that would take care of us for the next 5 to 7 years. But this process of saying we have to do something tonight because we are going to adjourn in the Senate for the next month and, therefore, bang, we have to do something quickly tonight—we cannot debate it, look at it, or examine it—what kind of nonsense is that?

So I hope we do not have to adjourn tonight. I see no reason why we cannot be in next week. Those who want to vote to adjourn had better be ready to go back and tell their farmers, no, we thought it was more important to take time off than to debate this farm bill fully, in an open and free debate, with opportunity for amendments to it.

So, Mr. President, perhaps I am just venting frustration, but I believe a lot of others share those frustrations. I hope that in some way I am representing the frustrations of the farmers I represent, because they are frustrated. They do not know what to expect. They would like to have a little certainty, too. Right now, all we are giving them is uncertainty. If we adjourn for a month tonight, they have another month of uncertainty. It is unfair and unconscionable that we would walk out of this place tonight and adjourn without having a full, fair, and open debate on amendments to a farm bill, which cannot take place in 3 hours tonight. It may take tomorrow and it might take Monday. That is fair. I do not know how many days the 1990 farm bill took. I am informed that it took 7 days. The 1985 farm bill took about the same amount of time. We had the telecom bill. How many days did that take? I think a couple of weeks. The farm bill is every bit as important to our farmers as the telecom bill is to the people in telecommunications. I do not think the farm bill needs 7 days, but at least 2 or 3 days, to debate and amend it and have final passage. I do not see why we cannot do that tomorrow, Monday, and Tuesday. There is no reason we cannot do it.

I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. EXON. 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. EXON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for approximately 5 minutes on the matter of the agricultural bill.

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

AGRICULTURE

Mr. EXON. Mr. President, I have listened to my distinguished colleague from the neighboring State of Iowa. I want to share with the Senate the fact that my frustrations run very deep, as deep as so eloquently expressed by my colleague from the State of Iowa, Senator HARKIN.

Here we are, Mr. President, 10 minutes after 7:00 on the 1st day of February, and there is rapid talk in this body about adjourning this evening until sometime around February 28. Now, obviously, adjourning here without taking any action whatever on a farm bill is not only wrong, it is not only bad policy, but it is ridiculous.

How do we work ourselves out of the dilemma we find ourselves in right now? Mr. President, it would seem to me that it would be a time for cooler heads to prevail. I think we have two basic options: Either we stay here and

work and not adjourn, as has been contemplated, and I suspect that would be the best possible course of action of all the options that we have; or the second option, it seems to me, would be if we are going to adjourn tonight, and if we adjourn I suspect we will have a roll-call vote on adjournment so that we will all know in this body and elsewhere as to who wanted to adjourn when we have important work that we should remain here doing. The other option of not staying here, if we are bound and determined to adjourn, which I will oppose, but if that happens, we are going to leave here without any resolution whatever on the farm bill, would be the worse of all possible worlds. If we are not going to continue to stay here and work and hammer out a compromise of some kind, then I think the next best option would be for a simple 1-year extension of the present farm bill.

The only significant changes that I suggest that we should make in that regard is to accept and provide a simplification of the rules, regulations, and red tape, and truly allow the farmers of America, for the most part, to farm for the 1996 year without all of the complicated restraints that they have. I simply say the simplification of the rules and allowing the farmers more freedom is one part of the Freedom to Farm Act that I generally have supported.

I hope that all would realize and recognize that we either have the option of trying to work out something tonight, which I think is going to be extremely difficult. If we cannot do that, I think we should schedule to be here tomorrow and Saturday, if necessary, and again next week, in an effort to try and come to some kind of a workable compromise that can get the required number of votes, and/or tonight stand to face reality and say it is going to be very difficult to come to some kind of an agreement. Probably the best thing for all sides to do would simply be to recognize and realize that the best thing to do under the circumstances in consideration to the farmers of America, who are anxiously awaiting what we are going to do here with regard to a farm bill, is to have a 1-year extension of the present farm bill with the caveats I have just expressed.

Mr. President, it seems to me, therefore, we once again are up against time constraints—some of them real, some of them imaginary. By and large, I see no reason why we should be adjourning when we should be here working. If adjournment is the way we are going to go, I appeal for all sides to realize and recognize, in the interests of agriculture, while extending the present farm bill for 1 year is not the way I would like to go, it may be the only way for us to go and provide a measure of assurance to the food producers of America that we do, indeed, care and appreciate what they are going through.

Here we are in February talking about a farm bill that should have been

passed no later than the beginning of the new fiscal year last October 1. Here we are, Mr. President, as the ranking Democrat on the Budget Committee, starting to make plans for the budget discussions in 1996, and we have not even finished the budget from last year. We are sadly behind what we should be doing—doing it right or wrong.

I think that, by and large, most of the minority, and I hope a large portion of the majority, in the Senate would realize it is time to fish or cut bait. If we cannot come to an agreement, I suggest it would make sense and be reasonable for all sides to agree to an extension of 1 year, with the caveats I have outlined.

FEDERAL TEA TASTERS REPEAL ACT OF 1996

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of calendar 306, S. 1518.

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

The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1518) to eliminate the Board of Tea Experts by prohibiting funding for the Board and by repealing the Tea Importation Act of 1897.

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

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

Mr. DOLE. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be deemed read a third time, passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements be placed at the appropriate place in the RECORD.

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

So the bill (S. 1518) was deemed read the third time and passed, as follows:

S. 1518

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Federal Tea Tasters Repeal Act of 1996".

SEC. 2. PROHIBITION OF FUNDING.

None of the funds appropriated or made available to the Federal Drug Administration shall be used to operate the Board of Tea Experts and related activities.

SEC. 3. REPEAL OF TEA IMPORTATION ACT OF 1897.

The Tea Importation Act (21 U.S.C. 41 et seq.) is repealed.

SEC. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act shall take effect on the date of enactment of this Act.

AWARDING THE CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL TO RUTH AND BILLY GRAHAM

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 2657 just received from the House.