

desk was Senator Charles McNary of Oregon.

Senator WYDEN's desk also has a long history. And I note that the last 13 Senators to have occupied it were Republicans, and hope that some of that heritage will rub off on Senator WYDEN.

Finally, let me admit that it is no secret that Senate Republicans were hoping for different results in Oregon's very close election.

But I take heart in the fact that even though Senator WYDEN is the 47th Democrat Senator, he is also the fourth Senator in this Chamber to have been born in Kansas, and certainly that will help him a lot here.

Senators KASSEBAUM, SPECTER, and myself welcome you to the Kansas caucus, Senator WYDEN, and we will get back to you later about the time and place of our next meeting.

[Applause.]

RECESS

The VICE PRESIDENT. The Senate will stand in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:53 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m.; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer [Mr. COATS].

Mr. PRESSLER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

THE FARM BILL

Mr. PRESSLER. Mr. President, I support the freedom-to-farm concept. Most farmers in South Dakota that I have talked to want the freedom-to-farm concept.

The Senate is in a filibuster situation, although the word "filibuster" is not being used. We are not being allowed to proceed to the farm bill by the Democrats. We must produce 60 votes in order to proceed. We apparently do not have 60 votes, at least not up to this point.

People should understand that many of us want to pass a farm bill. If we were permitted to proceed to the bill, we could then start offering amendments and begin discussion. However, the other side is not allowing the farm bill to come up.

Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to consider supporting S. 1541, the Agricultural Market Transition Act. Should cloture not be invoked on S. 1541, I urge my colleagues to support the compromise offered by the Senators from Idaho and Vermont, Senator CRAIG and Senator LEAHY. Their amendment incorporates all of S. 1541 and includes a number of other reforms. If we do not have the Freedom to Farm Act, we could have the Leahy-Craig substitute, which has the freedom to farm but includes a number of reforms.

Mr. President, I was recently back home in South Dakota and spent time

talking to farmers about what needs to be accomplished in future farm programs. The message was loud and clear: flexibility, certainty, and less Government involvement. Both S. 1541 and the Craig-Leahy compromise would provide all of those things.

Mr. President, S. 1541 would provide greater economic stability to producers. Producers in South Dakota are telling me not to extend the 1990 farm bill, and by all means do not let the underlying 1949 act be the operative act for 1996. After careful review, many producers say, support S. 1541.

There will be a lot of unwarranted criticism expressed over S. 1541. Those opposed to the bill say we need a permanent safety net for farmers. I say there is nothing permanent about Federal farm policy. The past farm bills were not permanent. All generally covered periods of 4 or 5 years.

Mr. President, S. 1541 would provide a 7-year plan. Unless economic conditions warrant an earlier revisitation of Federal farm policy, we will no doubt be putting together a new farm bill in 2002. So S. 1541 does not eliminate the real safety net for farmers, which, frankly, is the Congress itself. Those people who say there will be no farm programs after 7 years simply are not shooting straight. Past farm bills never carried assurance of future farm products except for 1938 and 1949 Agricultural Acts.

Mr. President, let me summarize my position. Congress should pass a farm bill now. We are ready to act. It is my recommendation if we cannot adopt the freedom-to-farm bill, we should adopt the Leahy-Craig substitute, which is the freedom-to-farm bill with amendments. We cannot even adopt amendments to that since there is basically a filibuster going on here. We have to produce 60 votes in order to proceed.

I implore my colleagues to let us proceed on the farm bill, offer amendments, as we have in the past in good faith here, in a bipartisan way. Let us amend the Craig-Leahy substitute. We are ready to go.

Our farmers are ready to go to the fields soon to plant. They are making their plans with their bankers now. They need certainty.

Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan and others have estimated that commodity prices in the next 5 years will be very high because of demand in China and other demand overseas. The biggest farm bill we could adopt is probably a balanced budget, because if we have a balanced budget we will have low-interest rates for farmers and businessmen. We also will have a stable dollar for international trade. I believe we can have a booming agriculture for the next 5 years if we have a balanced budget and if we move toward the concepts in freedom to farm.

Mr. President, our farmers want flexibility—that is to be able to plant new crops and different crops. If we

continue to go with a regulated Government system, the Department of Agriculture defines which crops must be planted. Indeed, it is true that wheat and corn are probably best suited to much of our soil. But who is to say that some new crop might not be experimented with and might come forth.

It is said if we have the Freedom to Farm Act that, after 7 years, the farmers will be left on their own. That is not necessarily true. Just like with a 5-year farm bill, the Congress does something new afterward. If the Congress in 7 years finds that the farmers are in need of it, they can pass a farm bill. They can even reinstitute the present farm bill if they wish. So that is not a good argument.

In talking to my farmers in South Dakota, they like freedom to farm. My farmers like the concept of flexibility of crops. The farmers in South Dakota like the concept of doing away with all the paperwork and Government regulation that has built up around this program.

There are those who would say we should not abolish the 1938 and 1949 Agricultural Acts. I disagree. It is time to abolish those acts because they are obsolete. Now is the time for forward thinking reforms. We should not be in a position of carrying forward outdated and ineffective 50-year-old farm policies as the basis for agricultural planning in the 21st century.

Opponents of S. 1541 want to extend existing farm policy for 1 or 2 years. Mr. President, the one thing my producers have made abundantly clear is they do not want the Federal Government telling them what they can or cannot plant, and making other decisions for them. They want, and deserve, full flexibility. An extension of existing policy means that Government will continue to dictate farming practices. This simply is unacceptable.

Under S. 1541, producers would have greater planting flexibility. Producers would have the opportunity to respond to market conditions. This is vital for their economic survival. Opportunities would be endless. Producers would not lose payments if they decided to plant new and innovative crops.

Mr. President, S. 1541 is supported by the South Dakota Farm Bureau, the South Dakota Corn Growers, and many farmers throughout South Dakota. They see great opportunities for them in their operations. A recent study by the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute showed that S. 1541 would bring higher prices for corn, soybeans, and all livestock over the next 10 years. Current high prices for wheat also would be maintained.

Under S. 1541, net farm income is estimated to increase from \$38 to \$50.4 billion in 10 years. In addition, farm program payments would be reduced from \$6.4 billion in 1995 to \$5.04 billion in 2005. In short, S. 1541 would increase farm incomes while lowering farm program costs to our taxpayers. That is a great deal.

The last point is important if we are to reach our primary goal of a balanced budget. Mr. President, farmers and ranchers are some of the strongest supporters of balancing the Federal budget.

A balanced budget would be great news for South Dakota farmers and ranchers and their families. It would mean lower interest rates and a growing economy. A balanced budget would reduce interest rates by at least 1.5 percent. A reduction in interest rates of that size would help raise farm income by more than \$2 billion per year.

So, to conclude and to summarize, I support this Congress going forward on legislation on the farm bill now. I am weary of the filibuster that has kept us from dealing with amendments. If we cannot have the freedom-to-farm bill, let us have a modification of it, which the Leahy-Craig offer encompasses. This will mean more prosperity to farmers and also less costs to the taxpayers. It will mean strengthening our position in international trade, which will help our country in general.

We cannot delay any longer. Our farmers are meeting with their bankers at this hour, trying to work out their financial plans. In the southern part of our country, they are prepared to plant. The Congress seems to be dilly-dallying. Let people understand what is going on here. We, on this side of the aisle, are ready to legislate. We are going to have a cloture vote today. I plead with my colleagues, let us go and legislate and offer amendments and we will have a farm bill worked out. But let there be no misunderstanding out in the country. We are not holding this farm bill up. We are here, ready to legislate. The cloture vote this afternoon, if we fail, it will hold us up again.

I want to make it very clear to my farmers where this delay is coming from. My farmers, generally speaking, want freedom to farm. Let us get the truth out. Let us have a farm bill now. I yield the floor.

Several Senators addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SANTORUM). The Senator from Indiana.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. 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. DORGAN. Mr. President, is the Senate now in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. It requires consent to extend morning business.

Mr. DORGAN. My purpose in seeking recognition was to ask unanimous consent to be able to speak in morning business for 10 minutes. That will take less time if the folks on the majority side need the floor at some point.

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

THE FARM BILL

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I appreciate the indulgence of other Senators. My intention was that if we have some morning business that we have it on both sides. I want to be able to discuss for a bit the subject of agriculture and where we find ourselves. My specific interest in doing so is that I think there is some confusion about exactly where we are.

First of all, the farm bill is not now pending. We are in morning business. The farm bill will be pending when we finish morning business and bring it back to the floor of the Senate. But contrary to previous assertions, no one has prevented the farm bill from coming to the floor. It is on the floor. It is and will be the pending business before the Senate. There is not an effort and there has not been an effort by anyone to prevent the farm bill from coming to the floor. Those who suggest that are misstating where we are.

The farm bill will be on the floor of the Senate this afternoon. It is correct to state we have had a cloture vote and will likely have a second cloture vote this afternoon. To suggest we should invoke cloture so we can get on to amendments, however, is a suggestion that does not conform with the Rules of the Senate.

In fact, in order to offer many of the amendments that have been sent to the desk, you would have to avoid cloture so the amendments would be able to be offered as being germane. After cloture they would not be ruled as being germane.

The farm bill has been on the floor of the Senate a very short amount of time. So, a vote for cloture at this point, would be a vote to cut off the opportunity to offer amendments and have them considered. Many of us feel that would be inappropriate.

Let me emphasize this because it is very important. This is not a debate between those in the U.S. Senate who believe farmers ought to have more planting flexibility and those who believe they should not have more planting flexibility. That is what this debate is being portrayed as. But, that is not the case.

I have offered a couple of amendments that are sitting at the desk. I have previously offered unanimous consent requests about extension of current law. In every case with the amendments that are at the desk and the unanimous-consent requests that I have offered, we suggest that farmers be given planting flexibility on their base acres. Let the farmers decide what they want to plant, not the Federal Government.

When people stand up and say this is a choice between those who want to put you in a straitjacket on planting decisions and those of us who want freedom to farm, where you get flexi-

bility, that is not the fact. It is a false choice.

No farm program proposal that I know of before this body would require that we be in that circumstance. Nobody is offering a choice in which farmers will be required to be told by the Federal Government what their planting decisions might or might not be. Everyone here, myself and others, believes that we ought to have substantial planting flexibility on base acres for farmers.

There is not any differences either, in my judgment, with respect to the issue of repayment of advance deficiency payments for those who suffered crop losses.

Everything I have offered through unanimous-consent requests, as well as the two amendments to the freedom-to-farm bill that are now at the desk, would do basically the same thing. We would forgive advance deficiency payments for those who have suffered crop losses. So, that is not what this debate is about either. If people stand up and say that is what this debate is about, that is a false set of choices.

I just heard a discussion, and I heard it previously, that this is not about whether there should be permanent farm law. They say, "Of course, there will be a farm program." Or they say, "There will likely be a farm program." That is not the case at all.

The freedom-to-farm bill has some attractive features which I hope we can capture and put into compromise and move forward. But it also has something which, in my judgment, is a bad feature for rural America. Most notably this is a bill that pays a severance payment. It gives severance pay to farmers for the purpose of transitioning them away from any sort of farm program at all.

Why do I say that? Because the freedom-to-farm bill itself says there shall be no more permanent farm law. This bill is going to repeal the underlying farm law. Why would they do that? Because they do not want permanent farm law.

They could rectify that easily, if they wanted to modify their proposal. But, they do not intend to modify it. These really are severance payments, paid up front, for the purpose of providing that there will be no further farm programs. That is what it is about. It is very simple and, in my judgment, cannot be misrepresented. I know people try, but it cannot be. There will no longer be a permanent farm law. That is the purpose of repealing it in this proposal.

The reason I care about this, as well as the reason that others care, is that we care whether there is a network of family farm yard lights out in rural America. In my judgment, if a farm bill is not designed to try to help family farmers, then let us not even talk about a farm bill. Then, let us not have a farm bill. Then, let us not have a U.S. Department of Agriculture, which was started under Abe Lincoln with nine