

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is agreeing to the amendment. The amendment (No. 56) was agreed to.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I move to lay the motion to reconsider on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, it is apparent that no one is prepared to offer an amendment today. There are several complex amendments coming, and I am sad we cannot get some of them discussed today. But in a few minutes I shall present a closing statement on behalf of the majority leader. Meanwhile, I will announce there will be no further action on this bill today. 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. BENNETT. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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. BENNETT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to proceed as in morning business for not more than 10 minutes.

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

The Senator from Utah.

THE BUDGET AGREEMENT

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, I have several matters to discuss with the Senate this afternoon. The first one I would like to touch upon has to do with the budget agreement that was reached over the weekend between negotiators on behalf of the Congress and the President of the United States.

There has been a lot of conversation over the weekend on the talk shows about how terrible this agreement is. I have read where Democrats have attacked the agreement on the grounds that President Clinton has caved in to Republican demands. One Democratic commentator, a former staffer to the President, has said this deal guarantees the reelection of a Republican-controlled Congress in 1998. It is just awful.

Then another commentator says this deal demonstrates how badly the Republicans have caved in to the President. It means the President can no longer be attacked for his failure to step up to the responsibility of dealing with taxes in a logical way or of dealing with Medicare in a responsible way. It is just awful.

There are some who say, when both sides say it is just awful, that means it is truly awful. And then there are others who say, no, when both sides agree it is not what they want, it means we have finally arrived at the logical answer, somewhere down the middle.

I think all of this is a little bit shortsighted. I want to stand and commend

those who were involved in the negotiations for having accomplished something truly worthwhile. Does it do what I would like it to do in relation to the Tax Code? The answer is, "Clearly not." We need to do far more about our taxes than this deal will do. Does it solve the Medicare problem in a responsible, long-term way? The answer is, "Clearly not." It simply postpones the issue until we will have to deal with Medicare again. This, too, I find disappointing. In both instances we will see the details come up in the Finance Committee, and I hope the Finance Committee, within the parameters of the deal, can fashion resolutions to these problems that are better than the ones that we have seen talked about in the press up until now.

But as we complain, one side and the other, about the deal not being what we would like, we overlook what I think is a truly significant accomplishment. For the first time in my watching of this process, either as a Member of the Senate or as an observer from the outside, we have a budget deal that does not depend upon smoke and mirrors for its budget figures to be reliable. We have a budget deal that does not say we will postpone all of the hard decisions to the fourth and fifth or sixth years. Instead, it says we will start to face the realities of what is happening around us right now. That is a very significant thing.

The second thing I would like to comment on with respect to this deal was given reference to in this morning's Wall Street Journal in their editorial. They said the real hero of these budget negotiations is neither the administration nor the Congress, but the American economy. The reason we were able to finally arrive at a conclusion that seemed to satisfy temporarily both sides is because the economy is doing so well that the projections indicate that we will have more tax revenue than the earlier projections would have shown. I want to dwell on that for a moment. I gave a major speech on the floor a week or so ago in which I tried to get across the importance of the overall growth of the economy in our budget discussions. We talk about the budget as if everything is a sum zero game, that is, if we take it away from here, you must give it someplace else, and everything adds up to a single sum.

That is not the case. The economy is like a business, constantly growing, constantly changing. I made the point in that previous speech that a sound business executive running a \$1.7 trillion corporation would not have the simple choice of either raising prices or cutting spending. We hear the discussion on the floor so often that those are our only two choices in Government. We can either raise tax rates, which is the same thing as raising prices for a business, or we can cut spending, when, in fact, every business executive knows there are times when you can raise your prices and get away

with it, and there are times when you should cut your prices in order to increase your market share. There are times when you do need to cut spending if it is wasteful or improper, but there are other times, when you are investing in the future, where you need to increase spending. This budget, for the first time in many years, seems to go down those roads.

There are some areas where we are cutting tax rates, as we should—cutting prices, if you will—to increase our market share and make the economy healthier. There are other places where we do need to cut some spending, and some places where we need to increase some spending. That is what upsets so many of my colleagues on the right side of the aisle. They treat all Government spending as if it is, per se, evil, and any single dollar they can cut out of the budget they assume is good.

They remind me a little of an executive I knew in a company who was under heavy pressure to start to produce profits in his division. He responded to that pressure, and pretty soon the profits started to come in. His boss thought he was a hero. He said, "Well, I did it by cutting spending."

It was a year or so later that we discovered in that company what kind of spending he had cut. He had cut routine maintenance, and the physical plant over which he had responsibility was literally falling apart because the routine maintenance had not been done. He was a temporary hero by cutting spending, but, long term, he damaged the business and did damage to the interests of the shareholders.

Our Nation's infrastructure has some significant problems. The air transport problems are very obvious to all. The highway problems are fairly significant and obvious. We need to be doing something about that. This budget allows us to have some of that, yes, increased spending in areas where it makes some sense. Why? Again, because the economy is doing so well.

I have been on this floor when some of my friends have berated Alan Greenspan and said what a terrible job he is doing at the Fed because he has controlled the money supply in a way that they do not like. Can we now suggest it may well be that the current growth of the economy stems from wise stewardship at the Fed, and that, indeed, the reason we can afford some of these increased spending activities called for in this budget come from an intelligent management of the economy long term. Can we also suggest that this has come from an attitude at the Federal Reserve Board that says we must put price stability above all else and it will pay long-term dividends? Maybe it is those dividends we are beginning to cash in on in this budget deal.

There is another thought I would like to leave with you, Mr. President, in terms of the economy and how well it is doing. I have spoken on this floor before about my experience as a business executive during what many people

called the decade of greed, the 1980's, when we took a small company, so small it had four full-time employees, and saw it grow to the point, when I left prior to my run for the Senate, when it had 700 employees. I have commented it was the tax policies that were pursued in those years, pursued primarily by President Ronald Reagan, that made it possible for us to grow that company. But we were attacked because it was the decade of greed, and, yes, indeed, we did do well.

I would like to point out that that company that grew in that period from 4 employees to 700, now has over 3,000. The momentum that was set in place in the 1980's is carrying forward into the 1990's, and it is that company and others like it that are providing the income taxes that make it possible for us to have this kind of a budget deal.

So, as we look at the whole thing, let us understand that there are many things about it that I do not like. There are many things about it that many of the rest of us do not like. But the reason we were able to get this degree of agreement comes from the strength of the economy, and the one lesson we should learn, as we look at this budget agreement, is simply this: As important as anything else we do around here are those things that we do that will cause the economy to grow at a more rapid rate. Whether it is increasing taxes in a certain area or decreasing tax rates in another area, whether it is increasing spending on things like infrastructure and other investments, or whether it is decreasing spending on areas where there is a degree of waste and fraud, all of these things need to be done with the primary goal of seeing that the economy will increase in size.

As it does, a number of things happen. The demand on our social spending goes down. There is no better welfare project in the world than a job, and a booming economy creates more jobs for more people. And we see it in terms of the impact on Government. We should pay attention to those kinds of things.

Mr. President, I will have more to say on this as the budget process goes forward, but, while the weekend talk shows were still ringing in our ears, I wanted to make this general statement.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to continue as in morning business, on another subject, for up to another 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HUTCHINSON). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BENNETT. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. BENNETT pertaining to the introduction of Senate Resolution 82 are located in today's RECORD under "Submissions of Concurrent and Senate Resolutions.")

Mr. BENNETT. I thank the Chair for his time and attention and yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there be a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each.

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

Mr. BENNETT. Noticing the absence of a Senator who wishes to take advantage of that, 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. DEWINE. 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. DEWINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to proceed for the next 10 minutes in morning business.

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

REASONABLE EFFORTS

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I want to call the attention of everyone in the Senate to a very important article that appeared in yesterday's Washington Post Magazine. The article profiles a woman by the name of Diane Hendel. Diane Hendel was the foster mother of twins who had been abandoned by their natural mother. In telling Diane Hendel's story, this article paints a devastating portrait of the foster care system, the foster care system not just in the District of Columbia, but the foster care system across this country.

It is Diane Hendel's story, and it is told from her point of view. But much more important, it is really the story of these two children, these twins, and what our foster care system did and is doing to them. It tells the story of these two children who were abandoned with serious physical problems, and it tells the story of the foster mother, Diane Hendel, who for 2½ years nurtured them, loved them, kept them going, became their mother.

Then this article tells the story of a foster care system bent on family reunification, that when these little children were 3½ years of age, that system decided the natural mother, who had abandoned them, was now the person that they should go to. It tells the horrifying and sad story of these little 3½-year-old children being taken away from the only mother that they ever really knew, to their new mother. All in the name of family reunification. All in the name of protecting the rights of the natural mother, without, in my opinion, any consideration for the rights not of the foster mother, but for the rights of those two little girls.

Mr. President, there are 450,000 children in foster care across this country today. These children are spending far too great a portion of their lives in a legal limbo. Early childhood years are

a crucial time in the development of any child. Indeed, there was a recent White House conference devoted to this very subject. It seems to me that as we pay more and more attention to what we all intuitively know—and that is how important the early years are in a child's development, and there was a whole magazine, in Newsweek, this past week, a special issue devoted to early childhood development. We realize, more and more, how precious and important those first few months, those first few years are, to the development of the child and who we become, and what we are is shaped in the first year, 2 years, 3 years, 4 years.

Is it not time that we reexamined in society how cavalier we are about having children who have been taken away from their parents, then sit in sort of a legal limbo, for a year, 2 years, 3 years or 4 years, all the while we, in society, we adults, try to reunify these families? But all the while, all the while, these children are growing up.

Mr. President, children do not have a second opportunity to have their childhood. You never have a second chance to be 2, 3, or 4. What is happening across this country in too many cases is that children are taken, put in a foster home—sometimes multiple foster homes—all the while we, as a society, wait until that magical time when the parents have been fixed—the natural parents. They have been cured, they no longer snort cocaine, they no longer drink alcohol all the time, they no longer abuse their children, and some day we hopefully will put them back, put these children who have been removed, back with these natural parents. I think, Mr. President, that we have to start worrying about the children's rights and less about the rights of the natural parents.

Every piece of new evidence shows us, Mr. President, that the system, the foster care system, is keeping children in foster care for too long. I think this should spur us to action. If any of the Members of the Senate want to become horrified, want to see what is wrong with our foster care system, let them read this story. I think it would shock any American to read it.

The Washington Post article that I just referred to outlines how the principle of making reasonable efforts to reunify troubled families is too often misinterpreted to mean reunifying families at all costs—even abusive families that are really families in name only. Abusive parents, abusive birth parents, are, today, Mr. President, given a second chance, a third chance, a fourth chance, a fifth chance, and on and on, to get their lives back together so then they can welcome their children back home. All the while, while they are trying to get their act together, their lives together, their poor little children are shuttled from foster home to foster home, spending their most formative years deprived of what all children should have—a safe, stable, loving, and permanent home.