

but this should not be one of them. This is not a question of how much money we have available. We should have voted 3 weeks ago. We could have completed four or more bills in this time, but we are at a stalemate.

Given the choices, this should be an easy call. Should the sponsors be asked to ignore their burning States, the danger of horrific, catastrophic forest fires, and set their amendments aside, or should the people who are preventing a vote decide they should let the Senate do what we are here to do, what our constitutional responsibility is to do, which is to make decisions on hard choices and then vote?

We have been in session for over 3 weeks, since Labor Day, and we have cast a whooping 16 votes. Six of these votes were unanimous. So we have cast 10 votes on contentious issues, which is less than 1 vote per day. That is not exactly heavy lifting. This time of year, we could probably do two, three, or even four votes a day and not work up a sweat, but we are not able to do that. We cast 5 unanimous votes, and we cast a unanimous vote on procedure in 16 days, which leaves 10 votes.

Some are saying maybe we ought to come in on Saturdays. Unless we are permitted to vote, what good is that going to do? If we cannot vote on Wednesday, what makes my colleagues think we could vote on Saturday, unless the objection to voting was lifted?

I do not want to shut off any debate, but when the debate is over, we should vote. If anyone has anything to add after 3½ weeks of debate, then I think they may have missed their opportunity.

I have spoken a couple of times. Obviously I have not moved many souls or they would all be stampeding to say, let's restore sound forestry management. Maybe they were not listening, maybe I was not persuasive, but I have had my shot. I think it is time we get on with it.

I compliment the Senator from South Dakota for figuring out a way to protect his State. What he did was sound forestry management. I simply want to see other people who live around the forests have the same opportunity as the people in South Dakota, which is to be free from the danger of catastrophic forest fires.

I have farmers who want farm aid. South Dakota has an interest, I am sure. I voted on farm aid. It was not germane or relevant to the bill, but I voted for it. Why can't the Senators whose States are on fire have a vote on something that is directly relevant to the Interior bill before us? I have not heard one substantive, rational explanation as to why Senators whose States are on fire should not be entitled to vote, even a negative vote.

I say to our distinguished leadership, explain to the people of the Western States that are on fire why they do not deserve a vote. The amendment is pending. Let's vote up or down; table it or not. South Dakota got special pro-

tection. Are Colorado, California, Montana, or Utah any less important than South Dakota? I think not.

Have the national interest groups gotten so powerful—and let me say, when we are talking national interest groups, I will let everyone in on a secret. It is the Sierra Club. Have the national interest groups and the Sierra Club gotten so powerful they can prevent Senators from standing up for the safety of people in their own States?

I note that the groups that oppose this amendment are very important and powerful, but until now I did not think they were powerful enough to shut down the Senate. I understand why the authors of the amendment would not want to pull their amendment because their States are on fire and in danger of being on fire. Given all the important matters funded in Interior, given that \$5.9 billion in drought assistance for fire suppression money, I do not understand why we cannot vote. Substantively or politically, what is more important than assistance to prevent fires and assistance for drought-stricken ranchers? It is clear to those who follow the Senate, there is bad politics for some who may not want to vote.

I appreciate some activists do not want this passed—that is their right—but we are not obliged to skip votes because an outside group does not want to see a vote on it. They have their right to voice their opposition on the amendment, but they should not have the power to stop the Senate from voting. That is a shame. This matter should be resolved in the way it should be resolved, with a vote; move to table and vote up or down. I think Senator CRAIG's effort to prevent forest fires is worth the Senate's time.

We have lots of forests the size of New Jersey. Firefighters and innocent citizens in South Dakota are protected. But Idaho, New Mexico, Montana, and Missouri should be, too.

I plead with those objecting to voting to permit us to do what the people have sent us here to do.

Before I conclude, I call to the attention of my colleagues in the Senate an editorial from yesterday's Wall Street Journal. It says the Democratic leadership is:

... now blaming Republicans for stalling the appropriations bill. In fact, the bill would clear quickly if he'd just hold a vote on the Craig amendment. But the Majority Leader knows a vote would force his party either to side with Mr. Craig (thereby alienating greens), or repudiate forest cleanup (thereby alienating voters this fall). We think it was a famous Democrat, JFK, who once said that to govern is to choose.

I ask unanimous consent that this article from the Wall Street Journal be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

DASCHLE'S BURNING SENATORS

If you want to know why Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle can't get a spending bill for the Interior Department passed this year,

look no further than his home state's Black Hills.

Those South Dakota mountains are at the center of a growing political debate over forest fires. All summer Senator Tim Johnson, also a South Dakota Democrat, had been taking heat from the state's rural communities for allowing green groups to stymie forest cleanup, a recipe for fires. So in July, to give Mr. Johnson a boost in his tight reelection fight against Republican John Thune, Mr. Daschle slipped a rider into a bill exempting his state from the very environmental regulations he'd long championed.

It took about a nanosecond for Western Senators, their own states in flames, to seize on this flip-flop and demand equal treatment. Idaho Republican Larry Craig offered an amendment to the Interior bill that would enact much of President Bush's new fire plan, as well as a South Dakota-style legal exemption for 10 million at-risk acres of forestland. Mr. Daschle—now trying to get back in green good graces—has tried twice to close Senate debate without considering Mr. Craig's amendment, and has lost both times.

And no wonder. This year's fires, and Mr. Daschle's rider, have become an enormous political liability for Western Democrats. They've had to explain to angry constituents why Chainsaw Tom was allowed to save his state's forests, while theirs were left to burn. And, with 6.5 million acres in ashes and more than 25 people dead this year, none of them want to oppose Mr. Craig's much-needed forest cleanup plan. California's Dianne Feinstein and Oregon's Ron Wyden, both Democrats, had even been trying to work out a compromise with Mr. Craig.

Mr. Daschle is now blaming Republicans for stalling the appropriations bill. In fact, the bill would clear quickly if he'd just hold a vote on the Craig amendment. But the Majority Leader knows a vote would force his party either to side with Mr. Craig (thereby alienating greens), or repudiate forest cleanup (alienating voters this fall). We think it was a famous Democrat, JFK, who once said that to govern is to choose.

Mr. BOND. I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. STABENOW). The Senator from Montana.

FIREFIGHTING FUNDS

Mr. BURNS. Madam President, I rise today to address this third vote on closure on the Byrd amendment directing the replenishing of firefighting funds for the Departments of Agriculture and Interior.

This vote really hinges on our desire to get drought relief to the West.

In my opinion, that is not what this debate is about. Drought relief has already been agreed to almost unanimously by this body. In other words, there were 69 votes for it. There is strong support in the Senate. I am a strong supporter for that relief.

What is happening here is the majority is saying it is our way, or the highway. America's farmers and ranchers know that is not the way we do business, or get business done. Solving problems takes compromise. I worked with the majority to get the ball rolling. I worked with the administration to get the ball rolling. We worked with the administration and the other side—not only the other side—for release last

week of money for livestock producers in drought-stricken areas. But now we see no compromise for realistic solutions. Every American has watched our forests burning every night on television. Yet the other side is reluctant to do anything about it—they have no conscience.

It does not change any law. It allows us to manage forest lands for the prevention of the disasters that we have had since 1998.

Come to my State and talk to the farmers and ranchers who have had drought for 4 years. Then, turn around and talk with people who love those forests. They have seen the forests burn for the last 4 years. And then tell me we should not have a vote in order to clean them up.

Have people lost their senses? They do not understand what happens in this biological world when we grow a renewable product—a renewable product. Have we had nothing in our schools that teach us?

I am like the old preacher who walked by a ranch one day. It was a nice Sunday morning. He said: Nice looking ranch you have got here.

The old rancher says: Yes, it is. You should have seen it while the Lord had it to himself.

We have people in this ecosystem.

These little groups, I might add, that have very little dirt under their fingernails—very little—are telling us to leave it alone, and Mother Nature will take care of it. The American people have seen that kind of management for the last 25 years. They have seen the results of it. It burned.

What is being denied here is a vote. We are being denied a vote on an issue that, sort of tongue in cheek, burns in the hearts of Americans. They don't like this. They do not want to see their forests go up in flames and have a renewable resource wasted when it can be prevented. That is what it is about.

We will reject cloture until the majority is willing to work on a compromise that will actually make a difference to Americans.

I want to associate myself with the words of our assistant leader on our side. Cloture is a terrible arrow in the quiver during these times on appropriations bills. It seems as though when we struck the deal for South Dakota less than 3 or 4 months ago, it was the right thing to do. It exempted all the laws.

Do we have a double standard here? Should those of us in other States who represent public lands which produce a renewable product not be afforded the same standard? We are not even asking for that much change. We are not exempting any law. We are not exempting anything.

What we are saying is make your case. Invoke a double standard, and then premise the argument that this is a vote against drought aid for American agriculture? It is absolutely absurd.

Any clear-thinking American who has watched the deterioration of our

forests and who has seen the results can stand there, and who in this body can look them in the eye and say, well, that is the way it is?

I will tell you how many votes they will get against their proposal. I have heard maybe three or four will come down and give the reasons they are opposed to it to justify their vote, and to answer some of the questions we have.

It is not right. It is not only not right, but it is not fair.

I have real people living in my State, too, just like everywhere else. But the unwillingness to give us a vote, which is our right and a constitutional need to get the House of Representatives and the President a vote to actually pass laws, has brought us to a standstill in this body.

It is not right. It is not fair.

Mr. NICKLES. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. BURNS. I am happy to yield.

Mr. NICKLES. You mentioned drought aid. Am I not correct that drought aid cannot pass unless the bill passes?

Mr. BURNS. That is correct.

Mr. NICKLES. If one wanted to get drought aid to farmers, would it make sense, since that has been agreed to in the underlying bill, to have a vote on the Craig amendment, and it could be an up-or-down vote or a motion to table, dispose of the Craig amendment one way or another, and pass the bill?

Mr. BURNS. And move on. That is correct.

Mr. NICKLES. And every Member on this side of the aisle is willing to do that. No one on this side of the aisle is filibustering this bill.

Mr. BURNS. That is right. No preconditions. No either/or. If we are really serious about it, give us a vote. That is what we are fighting for, the privilege of voting. That is all. Defeat us if your conscience allows. But give us a vote.

I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for 1 additional minute on each side. Our side is up.

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

Mr. REID. I have listened to my friend from Montana and my dear friend from Oklahoma. You cannot change the Senate rules. They can say all they want that they are not filibustering this bill. This is the fourth week we are on the bill. If they want to get disaster aid to the farmers, they should allow us to go forward on this legislation. We can offer their amendment on other matters, if they really care about the farmers; 79 Senators said they did. Those people are waiting for relief as we speak. They should go ahead and allow us to pass this bill. In the meantime, the farmers get nothing.

It is not as if we are not fighting fires. There is \$800 million that Senator BYRD and Senator STEVENS put in this bill for fighting fires. It is a question of their wanting to do away with judicial review, which we are unwilling to do.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. NICKLES. If people want to pass this bill, the way to pass the bill is to do it the way Senator REID and I used to manage the bill, and that is to vote. We get paid to vote.

For whatever reason, some people are afraid to vote on the Craig amendment. If we get on the bill, maybe someone will move to table the Craig amendment. We need to vote. The Senators from Montana, North Dakota, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, and other States that have fires are entitled to have forest management improvements just like South Dakota. What the Craig amendment is asking for is not as much as South Dakota received.

We are entitled to a vote. You can file cloture all you want, but we are going to have a vote. We are going to have a vote. To file cloture, so we do not even get a vote on the Craig amendment, will not happen. If cloture is invoked, we can still offer the amendment, so we are getting nowhere fast. We are not going to finish this bill until we get a vote.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2003

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of H.R. 5093, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5093) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2003, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Byrd amendment No. 4472 in the nature of a substitute.

Byrd amendment No. 4480 (to amendment No. 4472), to provide funds to repay accounts from which funds were borrowed for emergency wildfire suppression.

Craig/Domenici amendment No. 4518 (to amendment No. 4480), to reduce hazardous fuels on our national forests.

Byrd/Stevens amendment No. 4532 (to amendment No. 4472), to provide for critical emergency supplemental appropriations.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the clerk will report the motion to invoke cloture.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close the debate on the Byrd amendment No. 4480, as amended, to H.R. 5093, the Department of Interior Appropriations bill, 2003.

Debbie Stabenow, Harry Reid, Charles Schumer, Evan Bayh, Mark Dayton,