

least one other war in some other part of the world, we are allocating tax cuts and deeper deficits instead of saying to the American people: Stand with us; take care; let us go through this time of crisis together and then as the economy is restored we will stand together and prosper together. Instead, we are saying: Tax cuts for everybody—as long as you are wealthy in America.

That is not the best approach to get America moving again.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I strongly disagree with the characterization of the President's stimulus package as stated by the Senator from Illinois. He is a great advocate and eloquent spokesman for his values and views, but I don't agree with that analysis.

The problem we are dealing with today is that it does little good to be talking about stimulus packages, war, or other matters when we can't get the Senate organized. He challenged some of the statements I made and I want to talk about that a little bit.

First, it is indisputable that the last Congress was marked by obstructionism and failure. We produced no budget for the first time in the history of the Budget Act, almost 30 years. No budget was passed. We were not under a budget. It is a historic failure of monumental proportions.

Mr. President, 11 of the 13 appropriations bills that should have been passed by October 1 of last year remain unpassed. This Government cannot operate, cannot spend money not authorized by Congress. So we are at this moment unable to even take serious steps toward passing these appropriations bills from last year when the Senator's leadership was in control because we can't get the Senate organized.

Homeland security was held up interminably, over nothing more than labor issues, driven by the other side. After the election, the President got exactly what he wanted. The other side capitulated on that because they were not sound objections. They never were. And the American people didn't appreciate it, and they knew it, and the bill passed.

There were a lot of bills that failed last year that should have passed had we met each other halfway. Let me tell you how that year started. This is important.

Two years ago the Senate was 50-50. That changed when the distinguished Senator JEFFORDS made a decision to change last year. But when it began, it was 50-50. The Republicans had an effective majority because the President of the Senate was Vice President of the United States, DICK CHENEY, and he would have broken the tie on these matters. In an effort to work in a bipartisan way, TRENT LOTT agreed to something never before agreed to. He agreed to basically a divided Senate financing and an organization that was

historically favorable to the Democrats, because we were at a 50-50 deal, and he wanted to work in a bipartisan way the last 2 years, in the last Congress. That was a big step, to not fight but to reach an accord. Some criticized him for that but he did that.

In the course of that agreement, somebody said: Well, what happens if the majority changes in this year? We don't know that is going to happen, but over every 2-year period often things change that you do not expect. So the agreement was reached that if the majority changed and the Democrats achieved a majority and got 51 Senators, then the funding would remain the same for the Republicans so we would not have disruption in the middle of that Congress. That was the agreement reached. When Senator JEFFORDS made his change—and he remained as an Independent but he organized with the Democrats and they had 50 Democrats and 1 Independent to organize and elect Senator DASCHLE the majority leader—then the funding continued as we had agreed months before when the original resolution was agreed to.

That is what happened. That is how it is that it came out that the funding ended last year the way it did. It was not as if the Democrats made a great concession. In fact, TRENT LOTT made the concession. As part of that agreement that they worked out, they worked out how it would continue throughout that Congress, and that is what happened.

Now we are here in a situation in which every committee is chaired by Republicans, every subcommittee is chaired by Republicans, and we are back into the normal historical deal where you have a majority in the Senate—whether it is 51, 52, 53, or 54—and the majority needs funding. The majority needs other capabilities to operate the Senate so we can pass our appropriations bills; so we can pass a budget; so we can move legislation that needs to be moved.

So it is just not right to say this plan that Senator FRIST is working on to return to the historic way that we have organized this Senate throughout our lifetimes, and perhaps even more, is somehow unfair and not legitimate. It is the way we organized and the way we ought to organize this time.

So I hope we do not start this Congress with this kind of spat. I know Senator FRIST has, for days now, been working to reach an accord with which people can be familiar. I think there are some who think if they keep shoving it, the crisis in our agenda is so important that Senator FRIST will just give in. I think he will be cooperative and reach out, but there is a limit as to how far he can and should go. I know he is not going to capitulate and give in to an unhistorical way to divide the leadership in this Senate and to accept a resolution of organization that is not consistent with our traditions and the needs, frankly, of this body.

I hope this will be worked out. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

EDUCATION

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, first, briefly, I remind those who don't remember that my decision to change parties came about on the basis of education and education funding, not what we have been discussing recently. At that time, the budget had left the Senate with \$500 million to be made available for education—maybe \$450 million. But when it came back out of conference it was zero, absolutely zero.

It was at that point, in order to impress upon this Nation the importance of education and to show my disagreement with my friends on the other side of the aisle, I decided I would change over such that the Democrats would have control of the budget process and that we would not suffer the horrendous cuts which were proposed in education.

I would say right now we are still on that issue. The most critical problem we have in this Nation right now is education. I will discuss that now and try to put some light on the difficulties we are having.

Usually in times of war the question of national priorities is summed up with a simple phrase: Guns or butter. But today, I fear that the choices aren't that simple. Perhaps it is time that we retool that phrase and ask ourselves, will it be guns or butter, tax breaks or textbooks?

As the threat of war dominates our front page headlines and as we talk about stimulating our economy with billions of dollars in tax breaks, I was astonished when I turned to an inside page of the New York Times last weekend and read the headline, "Schools Ending Year Early Among Efforts to Cut Costs."

If I may quote from that story:

Fourth-grade students in Portland, OR will not read about their State's history in their social studies classes, nor will they study the metric system in math class, nor will they study electricity in their science class.

That is because some schools in Portland will be forced to slash more than a month from their school calendars this year because the money has run dry.

And Oregon is not alone in this crisis.

In California, Oklahoma—all over the country—schools are having to cut millions of dollars and they expect even deeper cuts in the year to come.

Schools are cutting janitors, cafeteria workers and substitute teachers in an effort to keep their classrooms in tact. One teacher described it as "death by a thousand cuts."

In my home state of Vermont, there is talk of whether a 4-day school week would be an option.

This all comes on the heels of last week's celebration of the 1-year anniversary of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Something is dreadfully wrong with this picture, and if we don't address this now, the consequences will be with us for generations to come.

What kind of a nation have we become that we put so little value on a school day? Every school day is sacred. It is an opportunity to expand a child's horizons, an opportunity to help a child build new relationships, an opportunity for a child to learn.

Our Nation's public schools cannot overcome the obstacles they face on the cheap. We might pride ourselves as being a superpower, yet we lag dangerously behind our counterparts in our commitment to fund education.

Of the major industrial nations, the United States ranks among the lowest in funding education at the Federal level, providing only seven percent of the costs. This figure pales by comparison when you look at our overseas competition.

Other nations hold their teachers in the highest regard, and compensate them accordingly. We do not.

I laud the efforts of the administration to boost Title 1 funding for the poorest schools, but the one billion dollar increase this year is still far short of the mark.

And I once again remind everyone in the Chamber of our failed promise to fund 40 percent of our schools' special education costs. We made that promise more than a quarter of a century ago. It is shameful that we have fallen so short.

In other nations, students spend far more time in classrooms than they do in the United States.

In China, the average school year is 250 days. In Europe, students spend an average of 190 days a year in the classroom.

In the United States, we are down to 180 days, and that number is likely to fall as school budgets are slashed, as we see happening today in Oregon.

We cannot, and we should not, stand idly by while our schools struggle without enough money to do their jobs. This is a national disgrace.

I understand that there are many priorities facing our Nation, perhaps too many for what our recessionary budget can afford.

But when we consider guns and butter, we must not allow textbooks to slip to the bottom of the list. The security of our great Nation is at risk, and the threat is right here at home.

We must act responsibly.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Mr. DAYTON. Mr. President, I was listening with some amazement to the discussion last night and earlier today about the reorganization, who is to blame, and who has the interests of the American people at heart. I have been kind of astonished at the reworking of the present reality and the past history by my Republican colleagues.

I am reminded that when I arrived at the Senate 2 years ago, I waited for 5 weeks to receive my committee assignments. We had, as others have said, a 50-50 split then, and the Republicans, because of the Vice President, had the majority. But it was unprecedented. So there was some reason for this delay. But then when Senator JEFFORDS moved over to caucus with our party in June of that year, I lost my committee assignments for the next 6 weeks while once again this agreement was negotiated.

Contrary to what I have heard from others across the aisle, it is my understanding that an agreement was reached for when the Senate was 50-50, and we had a provision that the agreement would end if and when the majority in the Senate moved to one side—not that it would remain the same for that entire session of Congress.

I had no committee assignments for 6 weeks while this split of 51 to 49 was being renegotiated, despite years of precedence and how we were told the Senate should be organized and how funds were distributed when the Senate was in clear majority by one side or another.

Those who are today shedding crocodile tears for their colleagues who are denied committee assignments certainly were not at all visible 2 years ago when I was waiting for those 6 weeks for my committee assignments to be reinstated.

I don't propose that our side should act as irresponsibly as others did 2 years ago. In fact, I am told that many of the chairs and ranking members of the various committees, as they will be reestablished under Republican leadership, have already reached their agreement about how they are going to allocate funds—either 50-50 or 60-40—along the lines of what they agreed to 2 years ago. It seems to me that those who are able to behave responsibly have already come to their own agreements regarding their committees and what we are left with are those who are holding out with insistence that they are going to have their two-thirds share.

I am reminded of my mother, when I was a child growing up with my brother and sisters, who said when we were squabbling over who was going to get this or that: Well, until you can work it out among yourselves, none of you will have it. It was amazing how, back then, it was possible for my brother and sisters at very young ages to work these things out, knowing that until we got it resolved, none of us could have what we wanted. So I think that would be a good admonition for my colleagues who are complaining today about the lack of organization.

I am reminded also that when we arrived here a week ago, our new colleagues were sworn in and the next day the Republican caucus wanted to adjourn to have a conference. In fact, we on the Democrat side wanted to stay in session. Senator CLINTON had an amendment to reinstate unemploy-

ment benefits for those who lost them in December. We asked for 30 minutes equally divided to debate that amendment and to have a vote. We were told we couldn't have that; there was not time. The Senate was adjourning to the next day so the Republican caucus could go out and have their conference.

We came back on Thursday. The Republican leader—the majority leader, now acknowledged by everybody and recognized as representing the majority caucus, the Republican caucus—told us on Thursday afternoon that there would be no votes on Friday, no votes until Monday at 5 o'clock. We had a long 4-day weekend and came back. I came back yesterday. I understood that we were going to have a hearing this morning—right at this hour, in fact—to confirm the nomination in the Governmental Affairs Committee of Governor Ridge as the new Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.

I met last week with Governor Ridge. I told him he had my support. I met with the Secretary of the Navy last week, Mr. England, who will be the Deputy Secretary. I said I hoped we would have a hearing this week on his nomination, as well, so we could pass that—I expect virtually unanimously, or if not unanimously, on a bipartisan basis.

Yesterday afternoon, I was told that the committee meeting for today had been canceled—not by the Democrats, who were fully prepared to convene today, but by our Republican colleagues from each State who in turn would be asking questions of Governor Ridge. I cannot believe that any of us are going to have any objections to this outstanding American and public servant taking over this helm as rapidly as possible. He certainly has my full support.

But the committee hearing was canceled, I suspect more for the fact that the present chairman has expressed over the weekend some ambitions of seeking the Presidency than anything else because, as I say, last week, when Governor Ridge and Secretary England came to my office to meet with me, they understood we were having a hearing this week—the Governor did—and certainly understood that the arrangement was as it was.

Of even greater concern to me is the fact that we had a briefing on national security scheduled for this afternoon, a top secret briefing for Members of the Senate, with the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Vice Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Deputy Secretary of State, about the international situation in Iraq and North Korea.

We have been back a week. We have not had that briefing. I am a member of the Armed Services Committee. I have not had that briefing. At 2 o'clock this afternoon we were supposed to receive the information, of which we are certainly entitled as Members of this body in which the American people