minimum wage is not a truly poverty wage, as it is today.

I support the raising of the minimum wage.

ADJOURNMENT TO MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1995

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Monday next for morning hour debates.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

DISPENSING WITH CALENDAR WEDNESDAY BUSINESS ON WEDNESDAY NEXT

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the business in order under the Calendar Wednesday rule be dispensed with on Wednesday next.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

FURTHER SCHEDULING

(Mr. GOSS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to underscore any confusion there has been about the time that we will be in session on Tuesday next. We will start morning business, Tuesday next, at 9:30. And we will start the House at 11.

Mr. WISE. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. GOSS. I yield to the gentleman from West Virginia.

Mr. WISE. Mr. Speaker, as I recall, it originally had been morning hours starting on Tuesday at 10:30, with the House beginning at noon. Now the gentleman is saying that the morning hour will begin at 9:30 with the House beginning at 11.

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is correct. There is no change. There was a misspeaking earlier. I am underscoring the correct time.

Mr. WISE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield, the more repetition, I think, on this, the better as far as Members and their schedules.

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, it is 9:30 for morning business and 11 for the House.

GOP'S CONTRACT ON AMERICA'S MINORITY ENTREPRENEURS

(Mrs. COLLINS of Illinois asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. COLLINS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, believe it or not my colleagues on the other side of the aisle see no need for continuing the vital efforts we in this body have made over the last two decades to diversify the ownership ranks in America's broadcast and cable industries.

Last week the House Ways and Means Oversight Subcommittee indicated its plans to do away with the Federal Communications Commission's [FCC] minority tax certificate program that has been instrumental in expanding the number of minority-owned and operated television, radio, and cable stations across our country and bringing more citizens into the great public policy debates of our time.

Despite the fact that diversity in the broadcast and cable industries has been constitutionally upheld as a vital goal of U.S. telecommunications policy, despite the fact that today only 2.9 percent of such firms are minority controlled, despite the fact that undercapitalization continues to be a major impediment to minority representation in these fields, the GOP sees the FCC's minority tax certificate program as a needless initiative.

Mr. Speaker, the information age is upon us but unfortunately those individuals and communities that are presently underserved and could potentially benefit most from advances in technology and access to the airwaves are still standing on the shoulder of the superhighway in the dust being kicked up by the megacorporations tooling down the road past them. Apparently, this suits the new majority party just fine. It sure is a new era in Washington.

□ 1500

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

URGING SUPPORT FOR RESOLUTION PRESERVING EARNINGS OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE BLIND

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FOLEY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Mr. KENNELLY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. Kennelly. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a resolution expressing the sense of Congress that the blind should continue to be able to earn as much as senior citizens under the Social Security earnings test. I will offer an amendment in the Ways and Means Committee when it marks up the Republican contract to continue the same earnings test for the blind as seniors will have under the Senior Citizen's Equity Act. This action will ensure that blind individuals can continue to be self sufficient, productive members of society.

In 1977, Congress established the same earnings exemption standard for the blind and retirees under the age of 70. In fact, this action was championed by the present chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, and provided blind individuals with incentives to contribute as members of the work force.

Blindness is often associated with adverse social and economic consequences. It is often difficult for blind individuals to find sustained employment or for that matter employment at all. Action by Congress in 1977 provided a great deal of hope and incentive for the blind population in this country.

The Republican Contract With America raises the earnings test for senior citizens from $11,160 a year to $30,000 in the year 2000. However, the bill specifically de-links blind workers from this increase in the earnings test.

It is my hope that the link between senior citizens and blind individuals can continue. Let's not remove the incentive to work that we were wise enough to offer the blind in 1977. Many in this country want to work and take pride in working and contributing to society.

I have always been a supporter of the blind. When I first came to Congress in 1982 I successfully offered an amendment as a member of the Public Works and Transportation Committee that gave the blind priority to provide vending machines at rests areas and safe areas on the National Interstate Highway System. Since that time nearly every State has passed similar State laws. This action has provided lucrative revenue opportunities for over 600 blind people throughout the country and has been considered by many as a major revenue source for the blind.

We in Congress have been successful in the past 20 years in providing opportunities for the blind to succeed. Let us not go back, let us move forward and extend the increase in the earnings exemption that we are providing to seniors to the blind.

I urge my colleagues to support this important resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska [Mr. BEREUTER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. BEREUTER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

PRESERVING THE REPUTATION OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. VOLKMER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. VOLKMER. Mr. Speaker, I view the House of Representatives as one of the most respected bodies and institutions in this world, maybe not quite to the extent that I do my church and my home, but it reaches right up there with them.

This is the greatest institution for democracy in the world. It should never be sullied, should never be soiled

by actions of any of its Members, yet today we have a stain on the U.S. House of Representatives. We have a cloud over its existence. That is the question of the Speaker's involvement with Rupert Murdoch over the book deal.

Mr. Speaker, only 2 weeks ago, finally we had a House Ethics Committee appointed. It has not met. Nothing has been done. Yet we all know from published reports of the meetings between the Speaker, Mr. Murdoch, his lobbyists, and others, we all know that the corporations that are controlled by Mr. Murdoch have matters pending before the Federal Communications Commission.

We all know that there is possible pending legislation that would benefit Mr. Murdoch and his holdings before this House of Representatives. We should have a thorough investigation. Yet, what it appears is going on now is, there is nothing going to be done, that that committee is not going to meet.

It is not just the committee in action that concerns me. It is the fact that everyone agrees; we just heard from Mr. Wertheimer of Common Cause, who says we need an adviser for ethics outside, independent counsel, to look into this. I agree. We cannot just rely on our old Ethics Committee to examine what occurred or what did not occur.

I'm not prejudging the Speaker, but I do think that it needs a complete airing so that that stain can be removed from this House, or the cloud can be lifted, so that we can proceed with our business.

The other matter I would like to talk about is one that relates directly to this House of Representatives that I love so well. That is the fairness of each individual member to be able to propose and examine their ideas as far as legislation is concerned.

We have coming up in the next 2 weeks legislation put out by the Committee on the Judiciary so-called separate crime bills. Just today we hear that the majority proposes that on certain of those crime bills, those that are the most controversial, those that will take the longest, those that will have amendments, those that will have substitutes, they propose to limit the time that the individual Members of this body, whether Democrat or Republican, can even address the House and offer their amendments.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the majority that they closely examine and rethink that proposal. I believe that if the majority wishes to proceed with their legislation under the 100-day calendar, if they wish to do so, to work with the minority, I am sure that you would find that many of these so-called crime bills, some, at least three or four, there is not much controversy about at all.

Those would be disposed of very rapidly, so that the time remaining could be devoted to those areas where there is diversity of opinion and not try to lump them all as the same.

I believe strongly, and as long as I am here will work to make sure that every Member, whether Democrat or Republican, has the opportunity to offer amendments to bills, to have that discussion, to have that idea brought up, and I don't believe anybody should be gagged by the majority just to expedite a matter.

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO POSTPONE RECORDED VOTES ON AMENDMENTS IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, AND TO REDUCE TO 5 MINUTES INTERVENING TIME BETWEEN VOTES

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that during further consideration of H.R. 2, pursuant to House Resolution 55, the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may postpone until a time during further consideration in the Committee of the Whole a request for a recorded vote on any amendment, and that the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may reduce to not less than 5 minutes the time for voting by electronic device on any postponed question that immediately follows another vote by electronic device with intervening business, providing that the time for voting by electronic device on the first in any series of questions shall be not less than 15 minutes.

Mr. VOLKMER. Reserving the right to object, and I do not plan to object, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to know if this has been covered or at least discussed with the minority to make sure there is no objection to it. I think that is everything we were talking about earlier, so on Monday the votes could possibly be postponed until 5 o'clock.

□ 1510

Mr. ARMEY. If the gentleman will yield, yes, this and the ensuing unanimous-consent request I am about to read have both been cleared on both sides of the aisle.

Mr. VOLKMER. Can we hold that up for just a few minutes? Is it possible? I do not want to object, but will the gentleman withdraw at this time for just a few minutes?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FOLEY). The request is considered as withdrawn.

CONCERN OVER USDA PROPOSED REORGANIZATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska [Mr. BEREUTER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, this Member strongly supports efforts to create a leaner and more efficient Federal Government. Such efforts are long overdue. However, as the U.S. Department of Agriculture moves forward with its reorganization plans, it is critical to keep in mind that reorganization simply for the sake of reorganizing is inefficient, counterproductive, and often very costly.

The use of reorganization to achieve the appearance of change is certainly not new. This Member quotes from Petronius Arbiter in the year 210 B.C.:

> We trained hard * * * but it seemed that every time we were beginning to form up into teams, we would be reorganized. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganizing; and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency, and demoralization.

This Member believes this observation of some 2200 years ago is especially relevant as the U.S. Department of Agriculture considers a reorganization plan for the new Natural Resource Conservation Service [NRCS]. This Member is specifically concerned about the proposed closing of the Mid-West Technical Center located in Lincoln, NE. This technical center has proven to be productive and well-located and this Member is extremely doubtful that the proposed changes are either cost-effective or will bring great efficiency.

In addition to the specific concern, this Member is also concerned that the currently proposed reorganization plan will severely and adversely impact the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The current schedule to finalize plans by May 1, 1995, with implementation of the reorganization set for October 1, 1995, needs to be placed on hold until a reevaluation is completed.

Mr. Speaker, this Member, is concerned that the charge given to the U.S. Department of Agriculture to reduce administrative staff in the Washington, DC office is being implemented in NRCS by moving many of their administrators to the six proposed regional offices. In order to make room in the budget to fund the new regional administrative staffs, the technical experts now located at the technical centers would then be sacrificed. It is this Member's belief that such a move would be very short-sighted and ultimately would undermine the technical capability and reputation of the agency.

The NRCS, formerly known as the Soil Conservation Service, has earned a richly deserved reputation as a highly professional and technically competent agency. Now there appears to be a clear, and not so subtle, trend to diminish the carefully nurtured technical competence of the Service. For example, the proposed plan gives lip service to the need for technical competence while at the same time destroying the very repositories of technical skill and the knowledge, the National Technical Centers [NTC's]. The explanation for dismantling the collective technical expertise of the NRCS is not comforting. The plan calls for the duties of the NTC specialists to be taken over by the States. Yet, the States' budgets are being reduced and the State conservationists do not appear to be enthusiastic about assuming this responsibility.