The legislative clerk continued with the call of the roll.

Mr. EXON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

Mr. NICKLES. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard. The clerk will continue to call the roll.

The legislative clerk continued with the call of the roll.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that further proceedings under the quorum call be dispensed with.

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

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT AGREEMENT

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be 1 hour of debate equally divided under the control of Senator EXON for 30 minutes and Senator SANTORUM for 30 minutes; at the conclusion of that hour that the Senate would stand in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. EXON. Reserving the right to object, and I will not object, I would just correct that to say that I believe the intent is it would be under the control of Senator EXON or his designee. Is that correct?

Mr. NICKLES. That is correct.

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

Mr. EXON. Mr. President, I yield myself 10 minutes under the unanimous-consent agreement just agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska is recognized for 10 minutes.

BALANCING THE BUDGET

Mr. EXON. Mr. President, those who are watching the debate on television might wonder why it was that it took us so long to get to this point. Actually, this Senator had sought recognition, the Senator from Arkansas was about to seek recognition, when we were suddenly cut off with the quorum call. I am glad that the Republicans have come back and seen the light to allow us at least to discuss a proposition that is very vital to America.

As I understand it, we are awaiting the offer by NEWT GINGRICH from the House of Representatives. It would be a continuing resolution to some time in the future, maybe 10 days, maybe 15 days, and stripped of all other extraneous matters except—I underline except—the proposition that we would have a balanced budget by 7 years using CBO's estimates.

That is exactly what was proposed to us yesterday during a conference that I was a part of. I will simply say to you, Mr. President, that this Senator is for balancing the budget in 7 years. I voted for a constitutional amendment to do that. The record of this Senator in fighting for control of spending in the United States and getting our budget under control is very clear, if not legendary.

I would simply say, if we accept the continuing resolution that the Republicans have come up with, I would simply compliment them and compliment them and compliment them for the fact, after we have been pounding this podium now for almost a month, that they have finally conceded that they are not going to insist on making cuts in the Medicare proposals. At least that would be a major victory for us. And I salute them for finally recognizing the failure of their ways in that regard.

However, I would say, Mr. President, that if we accept the continuing resolution, then that continuing resolution is essentially what the Republicans offered to us yesterday, which was rejected by the administration and, I suspect, will be strenuously objected to by the majority of the Democrats. This is a shell game that is going on because, if we accept this continuing resolution, had we Democrats and the White House accepted yesterday this same offer that was offered to us in the daylong negotiations, we would essentially be locking in the Republican budget that they are trying to force down our throat and that of the American people.

They would essentially have guaranteed the $245 billion tax break for the wealthy. They would essentially guarantee a dramatic cut in the projected spending of Medicare. They would continue the unfairness that is part and parcel of their budget. What this continuing resolution is, as I understand it, is another clever means—another clever means—of trying to fool the American people.

I emphasize that this Senator is for a balanced budget in 7 years. And as the Democratic leader on the Budget Committee, I am fashioning such a program that I will offer at an appropriate time. But I am not about to sign on, and I hope none of the Democrats will, and enough of the Republicans—to stop it. If they do not, the President will veto it, in any event.

I want to explain what they are doing. They are trying to put into law in the continuing resolution the basic unfairness of the budget that they are proposing. I would also point out, Mr. President, that all during the so-called budget deliberation, the Democrats have not been involved. I am a member of a conference with the House of Representatives on four matters: the debt ceiling; debt rescission bill that we hope to receive sometime tonight that they want us to vote on even before we see the numbers; the matter of the line-item veto, which I joined with the Republicans in getting passed, but after we passed it they wanted to make sure that this President did not have a line-item veto until they got their unfair budget bill passed; and I am also a conferee on the defense authorization bill, which is a very, very important matter.

I would simply say that in all of these matters, Mr. President, I am a conferee, but I have not even been conferenced by the Republicans. They have gone behind closed doors, shut out the minority Democrats, done what they want, stamped ''Republican fairness'' on it, and sent it on its merry way.

Mr. President, there is so much wrong with the procedures that are going on in the U.S. Senate today that I am ashamed, and I would best describe it as ''a swamp.'' It is not part of the deliberative body that this body has been known for for a long, long time.

To sum up as best as I have ever seen it summed up was an editorial in U.S. News & World Report, that of November 13, 1995, by David Gergen. I am going to read that, Mr. President, because I think it puts all this in proper perspective. It exposes this once and for all by David Gergen, who is now an editor at large with the U.S. News & World Report, but is better known as a very prominent Republican who served with great distinction in the White House under President Ronald Reagan.

Here is what he has to say in the editorial of the date I mentioned:

THE GOP'S ''FAIRNESS DOCTRINE''

Give credit where ample credit is due: True to their campaign promises, Republicans in Congress are forcing the country toward a balanced budget. Only once since the Eisenhower presidency has the nation written its ledgers in black ink. Now, doing what Democrats would not, the new GOP majorities are trying to restore a habit of self-discipline.

But in the eagerness to satisfy one principle, fiscal responsibility, the Republicans would ask the country to abandon another, equally vital, principle—fair play. This is a false, cruel choice we should not make.

When George Bush and then Bill Clinton achieved large deficit reductions, we pursued the idea of ''shared sacrifice.'' Not this time. Instead, Congress now seems intent on imposing new burdens upon the poor, the elderly and vulnerable children while, incredibly, delivering a windfall for the wealthy.

Proposals passed by the House and Senate would rip gaping holes in the nation's social safety net, already low by standards of advanced nations and once considered sacrosanct. Consider how much Congress would extract from projecting spending for key social programs over the next seven years: $169 billion from Medicaid, $102 billion from welfare, $27 billion from food assistance, $133 million from Head Start, at least $23 billion from the earned income tax credit—a program enacted in the 1970s that Ronald Reagan called ''the best antipoverty, the best pro-family, the best job-creation measure to come out of Congress.''

This assault doesn't even count the $270 billion reduction in projected spending for Medicare that is frightening senior citizens and could further squeeze public hospitals. Nor does it include the possible elimination of federal standards for nursing homes—standards signed into law by Reagan to stop rip-offs of the elderly.

Now consider how our more fortunate citizens make out under these proposals:

Left largely unscathed are billions in subsidies, tax loopholes and credits for corporations.