ORDERS FOR MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1995

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand in adjournment until the hour of 10:30 a.m., Monday, November 20; that following the prayer, the Journal of proceedings be deemed approved to date; that no resolutions come over under the rule; that the call of the calendar be dispensed with; that the morning hour be deemed to have expired; that the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; and that there be a period for morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PROGRAM

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, for the information of all Senators, the Senate will be in session tomorrow to adopt an adjournment resolution. It is also possible that the Senate may consider any legislative or executive business cleared for action during Monday's session.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, after an opportunity has been given to speak for the Senator from North Dakota [Mr. CONRAD], the Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID], and the Senator from Alabama [Mr. HEFLIN], I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in adjournment under the previous order.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CONRAD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The distinguished Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

GOOD NEWS FOR THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, this is good news tonight. The impasse has been broken. It is certainly good news for the country, and good news for the hundreds of thousands of Federal workers who have been furloughed and who have been wondering if this Thanksgiving would be a happy one for their families. It is good news for citizens around the country who are wanting to have their Government back in action.

Mr. President, now that we have achieved this breakthrough tonight, in what was really an initial skirmish on a much larger issue about how we bring balance to the budget, and how we bring the fiscal affairs of this country into balance, I think now, perhaps, is the time to start looking ahead at how we could achieve the greater agreement, how we could balance the budget in a unified way over the next 7 years, and how we could do it within the constraints of this agreement.

I say to my colleagues that there are a number of ways that we could have a breakthrough on the larger debate that is underway. I urge my colleagues to look at CBO and OMB economic forecasts as one way out of the morass that we are headed into with respect to a long-term agreement.

Mr. President, we could settle this dispute, balance the budget on a unified basis by 2002, but do it in a balanced way, in a way that was fair to all interested parties. Just so my colleagues have something to think about over the week break that we are about to have, I am going to put in the RECORD one possible compromise. I stress that it is a compromise, because this is not a proposal that will find favor among every Democrat, it is not a proposal that will find favor among every Republican; but I think we have to remember that a Democrat controls the White House, the Republicans control the Congress, and the President can maintain a veto with the number of Democrats that are in the House and in the Senate.

So, ultimately, we are going to have to compromise between what the Republicans want to do and what the Democrats want to do. Both sides are moving from principle, both sides have strong views about what is in the best interest of the country. Ultimately, neither one is going to get everything they want. We are going to have to compromise. It will be a principled compromise when it is finally made, but I urge my colleagues to take a look at what I am going to outline this evening, as they take this break for Thanksgiving and see if it is not at least an outline of what we can achieve if we worked in good faith and sat down together and reasoned out a final agreement.

Mr. President, first of all, you take the 7-year goal. I think the vast majority of Members of Congress agree that 7 years is an appropriate goal to bring balance to the unified budget of the United States. I want to stress that that is not the end of the job, because to achieve real balance, we are going to have to balance without using Social Security trust fund surpluses. But the first step is to achieve unified balance, and to do that in 7 years is a good goal.

One of the great disputes we have had is whether we ought to use CBO economic forecasts or the OMB economic forecasts. I think a lot of people get lost and say: What is CBO? What is OMB? Simply, for those who are listening, CBO is the Congressional Budget Office; OMB is the Office of Management and Budget. The Office of Management and Budget is controlled by the President; the Congressional Budget Office is controlled by the two Houses of Congress. They have two different scenarios for what the economic growth is going to be in this country over the next 7 years. CBO says 2.3 percent; OMB says 2.5 percent. Interestingly enough, over the last 20 years, economic growth has averaged 2.5 percent. Interestingly enough, the Wall Street Journal, last week, endorsed the President's economic assumptions. But they said that both of them are too pessimistic.

Well, what would happen if we just compromised between the OMB and CBO economic forecast? That would provide an additional $225 billion that we could distribute over the next 7 years, if we used the OMB economic forecast. Again, the Wall Street Journal says it is too pessimistic. If we did that and we went down the large categories of spending that we have to decide on, if we are going to achieve a balanced budget on a unified basis by 2002, one can see the possibility of a compromise that would look something like this: In the Republican bill, in domestic discretionary spending, they have achieved savings or cuts, if you will, of $440 billion over the next 7 years.

In a potential compromise, we might have a hard freeze, and just freeze domestic discretionary spending for 7 years—freeze it. That would save $289 billion. We have had intense debates on this floor about Medicare. In the Republican proposal they have saved $270 billion out of Medicare. On a compromise that would balance on a unified basis in 7 years, we could have a savings of $140 billion. That would preserve and protect Medicaid. It would strengthen the program, and it would do what the trustees say is necessary. But it would not threaten to close rural hospitals in the same degree as the Republican plan. It would not put the same burden on beneficiaries as the Republican plan.

I suggested to my colleagues a potential compromise. On Medicaid, the Republican plan calls for $163 billion of savings, or cuts, if you will, over the next 7 years. A compromise might follow more closely the commonsense plan introduced by conservative Democrats in the House and Senate, an $80 billion savings out of Medicaid.

On agriculture, the Republican plan is to cut $12 billion. Here it is not restricting the rate of growth. Here it is a real cut—no question about it. It is $12 billion less in agriculture. An alternative would be the President's number of $4 billion.

Mr. President, the Republican plan goes too far. It goes too far. They eliminate the authorization for an agriculture program that has been in the law since 1938. They eliminate it. I think everybody recognizes agriculture needs some changes, but we should not be eliminating the farm program in this country. We certainly should not, when our competitors are already spending three or four times as much as we are on agriculture, and just waiting for us to wave the white flag of surrender. That does not make sense.

So I submit to my colleagues that perhaps a $4 billion reduction could be part of a final package that achieves balance on a unified basis by the year 2002.