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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker.

MORNING BUSINESS

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of May 12, 1995, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member except the majority and minority leaders limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

DO-NOTHING CONGRESS

The SPEAKER. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. VOLKMER] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. VOLKMER. Mr. Speaker, here we go again. Just like last week, we are going to do nothing this week. This is really a do-nothing Congress.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at today's schedule. There are not very many Members here. We can look around and see that hardly anybody is here. Well, we have got two little bills that will be debated on and not even voted on today. If they are voted on, they will be voted on tomorrow. So, Mr. Speaker, we do not do much today.

We have one that says, ''Municipal Solid Waste Flow Control.'' That will take about 20 minutes to a half-hour. Then we have got one that says, ''Land Disposal Program Flexibility.'' That will take about another half-hour. So we are going to be here for an hour today, hour-and-a-half at the very most, and then we are going to quit.

Mr. Speaker, then we are going to come back tomorrow, and tomorrow the schedule says we are going to take up the welfare farm bill. That is what it is; a big welfare program for the big farmers. They call it the Agriculture Market Transition Act, but I do not know if we are going to take it up tomorrow for the simple reason that it is still in committee.

Mr. Speaker, I am on the Committee on Agriculture. We are supposed to go into a markup at 2 o'clock on that bill. They have already scheduled it for tomorrow, so I guess they assume that it is going to be reported out of committee and the Committee on Rules will meet tonight and we will take it up tomorrow.

If we do not do that tomorrow, then there will be nothing for tomorrow, except maybe they are saying that they may devise, under the leadership of their chairman of the Committee on the Budget, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. KASICH], a budget patterned after what the President proposed. They call it the President's budget.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we had one of those foolish things last December. They tried to do that crazy stuff, and it does not go anywhere. Even if it is voted on, it never becomes law. We spend hours debating something and voting on it, it is never going to become law. That is what we did all last year. We are doing it again.

Then, Mr. Speaker, they are talking about maybe Thursday we are going to have the President of France here in a joint session. Many of us, I am sure are not going to be here for the simple reason that we disagree with France and their nuclear testing policies.

We may take up a sense-of-the-Congress resolution, they tell me, and that does not become law. So what are we going to do? Nothing. What did we do last week? Nothing.

What should we do? I will tell my colleagues what we should do, and think most of the responsible Members of this House know, Mr. Speaker, that this week, right now, in order to soothe the concerns of our financial community, the bondholders and everybody, we should be passing a debt limit bill to increase the debt limit.

Mr. Speaker, I do not care if we do it for 60 days or 30 days or 6 months or a year; whether it is for $5.5, $5.7 trillion, whatever maximum. My Republican colleagues have already done it. They did it in their budget resolution, their reconciliation bill last year. So, Mr. Speaker, I do not see why we do not just go ahead and pass one; send it to the Senate. They will pass it, and we can get past that hurdle.

No, Mr. Speaker, we are not going to do that. We are not going to do something that needs to be done and has to be done so that this country does not go into bankruptcy, and so that we do not default and become a Third World power, so that we do not go into a recession. They tell me that after Thursday, we are going to recess all the way to February 26.

Mr. Speaker, Treasury Secretary Rubin has said that March 1 we go into bankruptcy, we go into default if the debt limit is not increased. What are we waiting on, Mr. Speaker? For those Members, both Republican and Democrat, who feel like I do that we need to do something about the debt limit, we need to increase the debt limit, there is a discharge petition up here. Mr. Speaker, 154 Members have signed. We only need 64 more. Surely there are 64 Republicans that are responsible that will be glad to bring it out, and we can bring it out and pass it and let it become law.

Now, Mr. Speaker, about this little thing right here. If this bill ever gets to the floor, I want my colleagues to know that I am going to be fighting it tooth and toenail. It is the biggest welfare bill that has ever hit this House. The other side talks about AFDC; they talk about food stamps. That is nothing.

Mr. Speaker, would you believe that under this bill, farmers in Texas and

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Arkansas and California, and other places, can get up to $120,000 a year, will get up to $120,000 a year, and not have to farm? They do not have to farm at all. They do not get it for 1 year; they get it for 7 years. For 7 years. That is $840,000 a farmer.

Mr. Speaker, I want to mention something. In the State of Kansas, in western Kansas where the chairman of the Committee on Agriculture comes from, there will be payments to 85 percent of those big wheat farmers to the tune of the average of $30,000 a year for the next 7 years.

FEDERAL BILINGUAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS MUST BE REEVALUATED

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. YOUNG of Florida). Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. ROTH] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROTH. Mr. Speaker, actions have consequences. it is about time that we as a Congress analyze how our congressional actions impact on America's future.

Mr. Speaker, in September, U.S. News & World Report put on its cover the issue of making English our official language. It was an absolutely eye-opening investigation into bilingual education, and I recommend it to every Member of Congress to read this portion of the magazine.

Mr. Speaker, the billion-dollar program of bilingual education reasons that children taught in their native language will somehow learn English more quickly. I would like to share some of the article's conclusions, as I found their analysis to be right on target.

Mr. Speaker, the first point and criticism that can be made of transitional bilingual education programs is that they are not really transitional. Too many students are held in these language maintenance programs, never acquiring enough English fluency to regain mainstream classroom capabilities. U.S. News pointed out a woman in New York who had a ninth grade daughter in the classroom of bilingual education for 9 years and this family had a very poor experience in that the youngster never did get into transitional English.

Mr. Speaker, all kinds of examples in the magazine, in U.S. News and World Report, point out that the family's experiences are all too common. For example, Ray Domanico, of the New York Public Education Association, says that bilingual education, ''is becoming an institutionalized ghetto.'' Arthur Schlesinger in his book, ''The Disuniting of America,'' points out that ''bilingual education promotes segregation, nourishes racial antagonism, and shuts the door to students,'' all things that we do not want to happen in America.

Bilingual education also is all too often not actually bilingual, as the report points out. The word ''bilingual'' implies that students in these programs receive equal amounts of instruction in two languages. This could not be further from the truth. Many students in bilingual education get as many as 30 minutes a day in English.

Mr. Speaker, how can anyone expect to pick up English quickly under these conditions? How can we expect the students to pick up English under these conditions? The answer is that they cannot.

Bilingual education does not help children learn English quickly and effectively, as Congress intended it to do, yet the program has flourished for at least three decades, going from a small pilot program 28 years ago to a $10 billion business, spawning a bureaucracy bent on self-preservation. Some of the Government's worst bureaucratic excesses can be found in the administration of these programs.

The inertia of billion-dollar budgets drives bilingual education expansion. In many areas across the country, children are misplaced into these programs. In some cases they are put into bilingual education classrooms not because they do not understand English well, but because they cannot read English well. These children need remedial English classes; not history in Spanish or Mandarin Chinese.

Worst still, Mr. Speaker, some children are placed in these programs simply because they have ethnic surnames. In a complete perversion of the so-called multiculturalism, children with names like Ming or Martinez are red-flagged on school rolls and are placed, without their parents' consent or permission, into these programs.

In New York City recently, a number of families became so frustrated with the bilingual bureaucracy that they took the New York Board of Education to court in order to win the right to withdraw their children from bilingual educational programs.

In some ways, these children are the lucky ones. They had parents who had the strength and courage to stand up to the system. How many children are not so lucky? Mr. Speaker, I have heard horror stories of Haitian Creole-speaking children placed in Spanish classes because there are not enough of them to warrant their own instructor.

In other cases, desperate school superintendents struggling to meet State and Federal bilingual education guidelines are forced to recruit uncredentialed, unqualified, instructors from abroad, many of whom do not speak English. The result, Mr. Speaker, is that we have teachers who cannot speak English teaching children who do not speak English. It does not take an Ivy League-educated Education Department bureaucrat to conclude that under these conditions, children do not learn English quickly or effectively.

An entire generation of children has been forced to suffer through these public policies gone awry. The high school dropout rate in these areas is exceedingly high; higher than any other rate. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I have taken this time to focus Congress' attention on what bilingual education is doing to our students.

Mr. Speaker, the high school dropout rate for Hispanic students, one of the telling indicators bilingual education was supposed to change, has not budged since the programs began. Tellingly, it remains the highest of any ethnic group—four times higher than that of most other groups and another example from U.S. News, three times higher than that of Afro-Americans.

Mr. Speaker, for most of our Nation's history, America gave the children of immigrants a precious gift—an education in the English language. As each new wave of immigrants arrived on these shores, our public school system taught their sons and daughters English so they could claim their piece of the American dream.

What are we doing for these new Americans today? Instead of a first-rate education in English, our bilingual education programs are consigning an entire generation of new Americans—unable to speak, understand, and use English effectively—to a second-class future.

This tragedy has human faces. Let me tell you about two people's experiences which will illustrate the impact of our failed bilingual education programs. I have never heard the problems with bilingual education more poignantly put than in the words of Ernesto Ortiz, a foreman on a south Texas ranch who said: ''My children learn Spanish in school so they can become busboys and waiters. I teach them English at home so they can become doctors and lawyers.'' Ernesto understands that English is the language of opportunity in this country. He understands that denying his children a good education in English will doom them to a limited—as opposed to limitless—future.

Bilga Abramova also understands this simple truth. Bilga is a 35-year-old Russian refugee who has entered a church lottery 3 times in an attempt to win 1 of 50 coveted spaces in a free, intensive English class offered by her local parish. Her pleas in Russian speak volumes about the plight of all too many immigrants: ''I need to win,'' she said. ''Without English, I cannot begin a new life.''

The ultimate paradox about our commitment to bilingual education in this country is that Bilga and others like her all across the country sit on waiting lists for intensive English classes while we spend $8 billion a year teaching children in their native language.

You have heard from parents like Ernesto Ortiz and how they feel about bilingual education. Even teachers oppose these programs. A recent survey of 1,000 elementary and secondary teachers found that 64 percent of them disapproved of bilingual education programs and favored intensive English instruction instead.

Even longtime defenders of these programs are starting to change their tune. The California Board of Education approved a new policy recently in which they abandoned their preference for bilingual education programs.

This year marks the 28th year of bilingual education programs. For more and more people, that is 28 years too long. It is time to take a fresh look at this problem. Bilingual education has had 28 years and billions of dollars to prove that it accomplished what it said it would do in 1968: teach children English