POLITICS, HYPOCRISY, AND THE RISE OF GAS PRICES

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

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, like all Americans I am concerned about the recent rise in gas prices and the effect that it has on consumers and on our industries in this country. I do not know exactly what the answer is, I am not sure that anybody does, but I think it does merit study by this Congress and by the administration.

But I am also concerned, Mr. Speaker, by the hypocrisy that I see Members of this House, of the other body, of the de facto Presidential nominee of the other party, the Republican Party, that after 16 months of being in control they have decided now they want to repeal the gas tax.

Where were they last January? Where were they with their tax bill? Now they have had this midnight conversion, much like the Earth Day conversion on the environment, and all of a sudden they want to repeal the gas tax.

I have been talking about this for awhile. Why did we not take it up before? It is politics, it is politics plain and simple, and unfortunately as the House continues to engage in this activity, the American people suffer.

LET US HOLD HEARINGS ON THE OIL COMPANY SCAM ON THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, gas prices are shooting up at the pump. Meanwhile, the big oil companies have just announced record profits. Gasoline inventories dwindle. Meanwhile, three major refineries announced routine shutdowns on the very same day, last Friday. Pump prices soared 30 cents on oil company speculation. Meanwhile, their Republican defenders in Congress blame a 4-cent tax. The President initiates an investigation and releases reserves. Meanwhile, the Republican Congress sits on its hands. Where are the hearings? People want answers. Why are the oil companies doing this? But all we get is a Republican silence of the lambs.

Mr. Speaker, consumers are in need, and all we get is a Republican fig leaf for the naked greed of the oil companies.

Let us face it. The gas tax is a dry hole. If we want to strike oil, let us pass a windfall profits tax on the money that the oil companies are taking out of the pockets of consumers. They are tipping consumers upside-down and shaking money out of the pockets of these consumers. Let us have Republican hearings on this oil company scam on the American people.

THE TIME IS RIGHT TO DO RIGHT—RAISE THE MINIMUM WAGE

(Mr. LEWIS of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, the time is always right to do right. And raising the minimum wage is the right thing to do.

This is not just an economic issue, Mr. Speaker, this is a moral issue. Hard working people deserve the right to earn a livable wage. The minimum wage is at a 40-year low. No one can live, much less support a family, on $8,400 a year.

Mr. Speaker, stop playing politics with people's lives. Bring a clean minimum wage bill to the floor. Do not load it up and bring it down with your pet programs.

Mr. Speaker, you have the ability, you have the capacity, you have the power to bring a clean minimum-wage bill to this floor and give people a livable wage.

BLAMING THE GAS TAX ON THE REPUBLICANS?

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

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I was just in the House Chambers, and I cannot believe what I just heard in the last few minutes.

I was here 2 years ago, and I voted ''no'' on the largest tax increase in the history of this country. It was the Clinton tax increase supported by the Democrats in the House of Representatives, not one Republican voted for it, and supported by the Democrats in the U.S. Senate. What did that large tax increase do? It put on the American people and the working people, from what previous speakers have just spoken, the largest tax increase in the history of this country, and I certainly did not see any of these brave speeches, just now given recently in the last few minutes, but some of these Democrats about this onerous gas tax. It is those people right there who put that gas tax on each and every one of us.

People did not have to be rich to get the gas tax put on them. They put a 4½ cent tax on every American that buys a gallon of gas, and today they are trying to get away from it as fast as they can run and somehow do a flip-flop and blame it on the Republicans.

Forget about the partisan politics. Let us talk about the tax.

FOREIGN RELATIONS REVITALIZATION ACT SHOULD BE DEFEATED

(Mr. RICHARDSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, SAM GIBBONS is an internationalist, and I join with many in the tribute to this great legislator.

Today we do not have an internationalist bill on the floor, the Foreign Relations Revitalization Act. It forces the consolidation of agencies, which is the President's prerogative. The levels necessary to conduct foreign policy are just not there. It get involved in China policy when we should basically be staying away. It put restrictions on our relations with Vietnam. It put restrictions on our participation in international organizations. It has severe restrictions on our family planning policies.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a bipartisan bill, it is a partisan bill. It should be defeated. The President's veto should be upheld, and we should not stand for partisanship at a time when our foreign policy should be bipartisan.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CLINGER). Pursuant to provisions of clause 5, rule I, the Chair announces that he will postpone further proceedings today on each motion to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 4 of rule XV.

Such rollcall votes, if postponed, will be taken after debate has concluded on all motions to suspend the rules, but not before 5 p.m. today.

AMENDING CENTRAL UTAH PROJECT COMPLETION ACT

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1823) to amend the Central Utah Project Completion Act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to allow for prepayment of repayment contracts between the United States and the Central Utah Water Conservancy District dated December 28, 1965, and November 26, 1985, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1823

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. PREPAYMENT OF CERTAIN REPAYMENT CONTRACTS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE CENTRAL UTAH WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT.

Section 210 of the Central Utah Project Completion Act (106 Stat. 4624) is amended by striking the second sentence and inserting the following: ''The Secretary shall allow for prepayment of the repayment contract between the United States and the Central Utah Water Conservancy District dated December 28, 1965, and supplemented on November 26, 1985, providing for repayment of municipal and industrial water delivery facilities for which repayment is provided pursuant to such contract, under terms and conditions similar to those contained in the supplemental contract that provided for the prepayment of the Jordan Aqueduct dated October 28, 1993. The prepayment may be provided

in several installments to reflect substantial completion of the delivery facilities being prepaid and may not be adjusted on the basis of the type of prepayment financing utilized by the District. The District shall exercise its right to prepayment pursuant to this section by the end of fiscal year 2002. Nothing in this section authorizes or terminates the authority to use tax exempt bond financing for this prepayment.''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN] and the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. RICHARDSON] will each be recognized for 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN].

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. HANSEN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Chairman DON YOUNG and Congressman DOOLITTLE for their assistance in moving this bill forward. Although it is non-controversial, it is of great importance to the State of Utah.

H.R. 1823 extends the preexisting authority of the Secretary of the Interior to accept prepayment from the Central Utah Project for municipal and industrial repayment contracts. In 1992, Congress enacted the Reclamation Projects Authorization and Adjustment Act of 1992, which included the Central Utah Project Completion Act Section 210 of the Central Utah Project Completion Act authorized the Secretary to negotiate the prepayment of the Jordan Aqueduct component of the Central Utah Project.

Negotiations between the Secretary of the Interior and the local waterusers concluded in a prepayment agreement dated October 28, 1993. Under the terms of the prepayment agreement, the future repayment debt to the Federal Government was paid back based on the 30 year U.S. Treasury borrowing rate.

H.R. 1823 extends this authority to repayment contracts and entered into on December 28, 1965 and November 26, 1985. By allowing prepayment on the District's debt, it is expected that prepayment of the District's remaining debt could yield the Federal treasury between $145 to $200 million. The receipt of these funds could be used to achieve current budget targets.

The financial benefit to the water users is also significant. Prepayment will shorten the repayment term, thereby providing for financial flexibility for the District and local taxpayers.

I commend all those involved in bringing this legislation before us today. In this time of budget austerity, I am very pleased to see the district work to come up with solutions that financially benefit the Federal Government as well as the taxpayers of Utah.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. RICHARDSON asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1823, a bill to amend the Central Utah Project Completion Act.

This legislation will allow the Central Utah Water Conservancy District to prepay its obligations for municipal and industrial repayment contracts.

This entity has repeatedly demonstrated its willingness and its ability to control the continued construction of the Central Utah Project, one of the largest Bureau of Reclamation projects. I believe that it is appropriate that the District be afforded an opportunity to prepay its contractual obligations under terms that are fair both to the District and to the United States.

It is my understanding that the bill language in H.R. 1823 neither explicitly allows nor precludes the use of tax exempt bond financing for this prepayment.

I further note that the terms of prepayment authorized by H.R. 1823 are specific only to the Central Utah Project and to the Central Utah Water Conservancy District. Many other water districts have proposed prepayment plans or project transfer proposals, and each of those must be considered by the Secretary of the Interior and the Congress on a case-by-case basis.

I believe this bill authored by the gentleman represents a fair deal for the taxpayers and for Utah water users, but it does not necessarily represent a policy standard or a precedent for other water agencies who may wish to proceed with an early ''buy out'' or transfer of their Bureau of Reclamation projects.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support passage of H.R. 1823.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN], the gentleman from Alaska [Mr. YOUNG], and the gentleman from Utah [Mr. ORTON] for their outstanding leadership on this bill.

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Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Utah [Mr. ORTON] who worked very much on this bill.

(Mr. ORTON asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ORTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1823, the Central Utah Water Project Payments Act. I would also like to commend my colleague, and dean of our Utah House delegation who has shepherded this bill through his committee. This bill is a win-win for everyone involved. From the Federal Government to the Central Utah Water Conservancy District to the citizens of Utah and finally to the American people who will be insured of the most cost-effective project possible. I only wish we had more examples of this kind of cooperation between the Federal Government, the States, and localities. This bill will allow the Central Utah Water Conservancy District, the builder and operator of the Central Utah Project, to prepay some of its debts to the Federal Government. The President and the Office of Management and Budget strongly support this legislation since it will guarantee an additional infusion of almost $200 million to the Federal Government over the next 5 years.

My colleagues may not be aware of the tremendous amount of time that it has taken the Central Utah Project to be built. We have now been in the process for over 40 years. Through years of hard work by my predecessors in the Utah delegation as well as the current delegation we have been able to accomplish the once unthinkable, the construction and now early repayment of the Central Utah Project. And this bill represents a hallmark moment in the history of this mammoth project—maybe for the first time, we are accomplishing something ahead of schedule that will benefit everyone involved.

While I had included this same legislation in the coalition's 7-year Common Sense Balanced Budget Act, it is obvious that this specific legislation is needed since Congress and the President have failed to agree on a 7-year balanced budget.

The largest facility to be prepaid in this bill is the Jordanelle Dam which has already been completed. It is expected that the Jordanelle Reservoir, pursuant to an already agreed upon plan with the Bureau of Reclamation, will be filled with sufficient water to start repayment by the Central Utah Water Conservancy District. And once the district's repayment obligation is triggered, the district will exercise its option to prepay its repayment debt.

Since most of the Central Utah Project is located in my district, let me assure my colleagues how important this legislation is to the people of Utah. Again, this is a great example of creative financing that will benefit everyone involved.

I again commend my colleague, the chairman of the subcommittee, in his efforts in this bill. I urge adoption, and urge all of my colleagues to vote ''yes'' on H.R. 1823.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, let me commend the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN] for his authorship of this bill. It is a good bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for their support of this bill. I also would like to mention the gentlewoman from Utah, Ms. ENID GREENE, who worked diligently to help get this

bill through, which is a great benefit for the residents of the State of Utah.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CLINGER). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1823, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5, rule I, and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

AMENDING THE NATIONAL FOREST SKI AREA PERMIT ACT OF 1986

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1527) to amend the National Forest Ski Area Permit Act of 1986 to clarify the authorities and duties of the Secretary of Agriculture in issuing ski area permits on National Forest System lands and to withdraw lands within ski area permit boundaries from the operation of the mining and mineral leasing laws, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1527

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SKI AREA PERMIT RENTAL CHARGE.

(a) The Secretary of Agriculture shall charge a rental charge for all ski area permits issued pursuant to section 3 of the National Forest Ski Area Permit Act of 1986 (16 U.S.C. 497b), the Act of March 4, 1915 (38 Stat. 1101, chapter 144; 16 U.S.C. 497), or the 9th through 20th paragraphs under the heading ''SURVEYING THE PUBLIC LANDS'' under the heading ''UNDER THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR'' in the Act of June 4, 1897 (30 Stat. 34, chapter 2), on National Forest System lands. Permit rental charges for permits issued pursuant to the National Forest Ski Area Permit Act of 1986 shall be calculated as set forth in subsection (b). Permit rental charges for existing ski area permits issued pursuant to the Act of March 4, 1915, and the Act of June 4, 1897, shall be calculated in accordance with those existing permits: *Provided,* That a permittee may, at the permittee's option, use the calculation method set forth in subsection (b).

(b)(1) The ski area permit rental charge (SAPRC) shall be calculated by adding the permittee's gross revenues from lift ticket/year-round ski area use pass sales plus revenue from ski school operations (LT+SS) and multiplying such total by the slope transport feet percentage (STFP) on National Forest System land. That amount shall be increased by the gross year-round revenue from ancillary facilities (GRAF) physically located on national forest land, including all permittee or subpermittee lodging, food service, rental shops, parking and other ancillary operations, to determine the adjusted gross revenue (AGR) subject to the permit rental charge. The final rental charge shall be calculated by multiplying the AGR by the following percentages for each revenue bracket and adding the total for each revenue bracket:

(A) 1.5 percent of all adjusted gross revenue below $3,000,000;

(B) 2.5 percent for adjusted gross revenue between $3,000,000 and $15,000,000;

(C) 2.75 percent for adjusted gross revenue between $15,000,000 and $50,000,000; and

(D) 4.0 percent for the amount of adjusted gross revenue that exceeds $50,000,000.

Utilizing the abbreviations indicated in this subsection the ski area permit fee (SAPF) formula can be simply illustrated as:

SAPF=((LT+SS)STFP)+GRAF=AGR; AGR% BRACKETS

(2) In cases where ski areas are only partially located on national forest lands, the slope transport feet percentage on national forest land referred to in subsection (b) shall be calculated as generally described in the Forest Service Manual in effect as of January 1, 1992. Revenues from Nordic ski operations shall be included or excluded from the rental charge calculation according to the percentage of trails physically located on national forest land.

(3) In order to ensure that the rental charge remains fair and equitable to both the United States and ski area permittees, the adjusted gross revenue figures for each revenue bracket in paragraph (1) shall be adjusted annually by the percent increase or decrease in the national Consumer Price Index for the preceding calendar year. No later than 3 years after the date of enactment of this Act and periodically thereafter the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the United States Senate and the Committee on Resources of the United States House of Representatives a report analyzing whether the ski area permit rental charge legislated by this Act is returning a fair market value rental to the United States together with any recommendations the Secretary may have for modifications of the system.

(c) The rental charge set forth in subsection (b) shall be due on June 1 of each year and shall be paid or prepaid by the permittee on a monthly, quarterly, annual or other schedule as determined appropriate by the Secretary in consultation with the permittee. Unless mutually agreed otherwise by the Secretary and the permittee, the payment or prepayment schedule shall conform to the permittee's schedule in effect prior to enactment of this Act. To reduce costs to the permittee and the Forest Service, the Secretary shall each year provide the permittee with a standardized form and worksheets (including annual rental charge calculation brackets and rates) to be used for rental charge calculation and submitted with the rental charge payment. Information provided on such forms shall be compiled by the Secretary annually and kept in the Office of the Chief, U.S. Forest Service.

(d) The ski area permit rental charge set forth in this section shall become effective on June 1, 1996 and cover receipts retroactive to June 1, 1995: Provided, however, That if a permittee has paid rental charges for the period June 1, 1995, to June 1, 1996, under the graduated rate rental charge system formula in effect prior to the date of enactment of this Act, such rental charges shall be credited toward the new rental charge due on June 1, 1996. In order to ensure increasing rental charge receipt levels to the United States during transition from the graduated rate rental charge system formula of this Act, the rental charge paid by any individual permittee shall be—

(1) for the 1995–1996 permit year, either the rental charge paid for the preceding 1994–1995 base year or the rental charge calculated pursuant to this Act, whichever is higher;

(2) for the 1996–1997 permit year, either the rental charge paid for the 1994–1995 base year or the rental charge calculated pursuant to this Act, whichever is higher;

(3) for the 1997–1998 permit year, either the rental charge for the 1994–1995 base year or the rental charge calculated pursuant to this Act, whichever is higher.

If an individual permittee's adjusted gross revenue for the 1995–1996, 1996–1997, or 1997–1998 permit years falls more than 10 percent below the 1994–1995 base year, the rental charge paid shall be the rental charge calculated pursuant to this Act.

(e) Under no circumstances shall revenue, or subpermittee revenue (other than lift ticket, area use pass, or ski school sales) obtained from operations physically located on non-national forest land be included in the ski area permit rental charge calculation.

(f) To reduce administrative costs of ski area permittees and the Forest Service the terms ''revenue'' and ''sales'', as used in this section, shall mean actual income from sales and shall not include sales of operating equipment, refunds, rent paid to the permittee by sublessees, sponsor contributions to special events or any amounts attributable to employee gratuities or employee lift tickets, discounts, or other goods or services (except for bartered goods and complimentary life tickets) for which the permittee does not receive money.

(g) In cases where an area of national forest land is under a ski area permit but the permittee does not have revenue or sales qualifying for rental charge payment pursuant to subsection (a), the permittee shall pay an annual minimum rental charge of $2 for each national forest acre under permit or a percentage of appraised land value, as determined appropriate by the Secretary.

(h) Where the new rental charge provided for in subsection (b)(1) results in an increase in permit rental charge greater than one half of one percent of the permittee's adjusted gross revenue as determined under subsection (b)(1), the new rental charge shall be phased in over a five year period in a manner providing for increases for approximately equal increments.

(i) To reduce federal costs in administering the provisions of this Act, the reissuance of a ski area permit to provide activities similar in nature and amount to the activities provided under the previous permit shall not constitute a major Federal action for the purposes of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4331 et seq.).

SEC. 2. WITHDRAWALS.

Subject to valid existing rights, all lands located within the boundaries of ski area permits issued prior to, on or after the date of enactment of this Act pursuant to authority of the Act of March 4, 1915 (38 Stat. 1101, chapter 144; 16 U.S.C. 497), and the Act of June 4, 1897, or the National Forest Ski Area Permit Act of 1986 (16 U.S.C. 497b) are hereby and henceforth automatically withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mining laws and from disposition under all laws pertaining to mineral and geothermal leasing and all amendments thereto. Such withdrawal shall continue for the full term of the permit and any modification, reissuance, or renewal thereof. Unless the Secretary requests otherwise of the Secretary of the Interior, such withdrawal shall be canceled automatically upon expiration or other termination of the permit and the land automatically restored to all appropriation not otherwise restricted under the public land laws.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Colorado [Mr. ALLARD] and the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. RICHARDSON] will each be recognized for 20 minutes.