very difficult for them to do without this issue being settled. So I hope my colleagues will join me today in passing this resolution that will clarify this problem.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1779. It is exactly as the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. BLUNT] has explained it. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BLUNT. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. EMERSON). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. BLUNT] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1779.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BLUNT. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 1779, the bill just passed.

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

There was no objection.

REAUTHORIZING THE DAIRY INDEMNITY PROGRAM

Mr. POMBO. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1789) to reauthorize the dairy indemnity program.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1789

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

SECTION 1. EXTENSION OF DAIRY INDEMNITY PROGRAM.

(a) EXTENSION.—Section 3 of Public Law 90–484 (7 U.S.C. 4501) is amended by striking ''1995'' and inserting ''2002''.

(b) TREATMENT OF EXISTING CLAIMS.—Section 2 of Public Law 90–484 (7 U.S.C. 450k) is amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: ''Funds appropriated pursuant to this section for fiscal year 1998 to carry out this Act may also be used to pay valid claims arising under this Act during fiscal year 1997 to the extent that such claims are not fully paid using fiscal year 1997 funds.''.

(c) ALTERNATIVE FINANCING OPTIONS.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture shall submit to Congress a report identifying and evaluating alternative methods to finance the dairy indemnity program established under the first section of Public Law 90–484 (7 U.S.C. 450j).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California [Mr. POMBO] and the gentleman from Texas [Mr. STENHOLM] each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California [Mr. POMBO].

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

Today, Madam Speaker, we are considering H.R. 1789, the reauthorization of the dairy indemnity program. H.R. 1789 was introduced by the ranking member of the Committee on Agriculture, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. CHARLIE STENHOLM], and I am glad to be an original cosponsor.

In the overall scheme scheme of things, the dairy indemnity program is a modest undertaking which reimburses dairymen when they are directed to remove their products from the market because of harmful residues occurring through no fault of the producer or the processors. Although this may be a small program, it can be vitally important to some of America's dairymen facing possible bankruptcy.

Since 1964, the dairy indemnity program was routinely reauthorized without much notice or attention. Unfortunately, it seems that after the smoke cleared from deliberations of the last farm bill, this program had been overlooked, since no action was taken to reauthorize it.

The recent rise in aflatoxin contamination in several States, however, has refocused attention on the need for this program. Therefore, H.R. 1789, which itself spends no money, would simply provide the authorization for this important program, which has quietly helped dairymen in trouble for over 20 years. At a time when our dairy industry is facing major challenges and restructuring, I would hope that we could continue to authorize and support this as a fair and equitable program.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to pass this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1789, and I want to thank committee chairman, the gentleman from Oregon [Mr. SMITH], and Chairman POMBO, and the ranking member, the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. PETERSON] of the Subcommittee on Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry for joining me in sponsoring and supporting this legislation. I am also grateful to the Secretary of Agriculture, Mr. Glickman, for his support of the bill.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 1789 authorizes appropriations for the dairy indemnity program through fiscal year 2002. Madam Speaker, on June 26, 1997, the subcommittee held a hearing on this bill and received testimony from the Department of Agriculture in support of the program and its objectives. The subcommittee also heard testimony from Mr. Calvin Buchanan, a constituent of mine who spoke on behalf of Associated Milk Producers. Mr. Buchanan is a lifelong dairy farmer, and he and his wife, Virginia, milk 500 cows in Decatur, TX.

During the hearing, Mr. Buchanan testified about the importance of the dairy indemnity program to a producer whose milk is ruined by contaminated feed. I quote:

> The Dairy Indemnity Program has been a small element of total agricultural policy over the years. It has, however, been the difference between many dairy farm families being able to continue in business and being forced to liquidate. . . .
>
> Not only do producers lose income from the market, they lose the value of the contaminated feed and often incur additional costs to clean up the problem. Given the current economic situation, there just is not room in the operation to absorb these costs.

Madam Speaker, at the time Mr. Buchanan testified, milk prices were very low, and the economic challenges facing every dairy producer in this Nation were enormous. Since that time conditions have improved only slightly, and dairy producers in Texas and many other parts of the Nation are constantly being forced to shut down their operations. Madam Speaker, passage of H.R. 1789 will be a small but important step which will help to preserve certainty of payment for dairy producers, and a safe and stable milk supply for consumers.

Madam Speaker, during fiscal year 1997 there were insufficient funds available to meet claims filed under the program. Appropriations and carryover funds provided $257,000 for the program, but that amount was depleted in February. There still are pending and unpaid applications for fiscal year 1997 funds in Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas in the amount of $230,635.

I am grateful that the House and Senate have agreed to provide sufficient appropriations to meet these unpaid claims. Even in good times, a dairy farmer faces difficulties resulting from revenue lost because contaminated milk is withdrawn from the market. Many of my colleagues are well aware that now is a particularly bad time for a producer to remain unpaid for his or her milk. Passage of H.R. 1789 will help provide financial security for our Nation's hard working dairy farmers. I urge all of my colleagues to support the passage of this bill.

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

Mr. POMBO. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California [Mr. POMBO] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1789.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.