

by actions of any of its Members, yet today we have a stain on the U.S. House of Representatives. We have a cloud over its existence. That is the question of the Speaker's involvement with Rupert Murdoch over the book deal.

Mr. Speaker, only 2 weeks ago, finally we had a House Ethics Committee appointed. It has not met. Nothing has been done. Yet we all know from published reports of the meetings between the Speaker, Mr. Murdoch, his lobbyists, and others, we all know that the corporations that are controlled by Mr. Murdoch have matters pending before the Federal Communications Commission.

We all know that there is possible pending legislation that would benefit Mr. Murdoch and his holdings before this House of Representatives. We should have a thorough investigation. Yet, what it appears is going on now is, there is nothing going to be done, that that committee is not going to meet.

It is not just the committee in action that concerns me. It is the fact that everyone agrees; we just heard from Mr. Wertheimer of Common Cause, who says we need an adviser for ethics outside, independent counsel, to look into this. I agree. We cannot just rely on our old Ethics Committee to examine what occurred or what did not occur.

I'm not prejudging the Speaker, but I do think that it needs a complete airing so that that stain can be removed from this House, or the cloud can be lifted, so that we can proceed with our business.

The other matter I would like to talk about is one that relates directly to this House of Representatives that I love so well. That is the fairness of each individual member to be able to propose and examine their ideas as far as legislation is concerned.

We have coming up in the next 2 weeks legislation put out by the Committee on the Judiciary so-called separate crime bills. Just today we hear that the majority proposes that on certain of those crime bills, those that are the most controversial, those that will take the longest, those that will have amendments, those that will have substitutes, they propose to limit the time that the individual Members of this body, whether Democrat or Republican, can even address the House and offer their amendments.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the majority that they closely examine and rethink that proposal. I believe that if the majority wishes to proceed with their legislation under the 100-day calendar, if they wish to do so, to work with the minority, I am sure that you would find that many of these so-called crime bills, some, at least three or four, there is not much controversy about at all.

Those would be disposed of very rapidly, so that the time remaining could be devoted to those areas where there is diversity of opinion and not try to lump them all as the same.

I believe strongly, and as long as I am here will work to make sure that every Member, whether Democrat or Republican, has the opportunity to offer amendments to bills, to have that discussion, to have that idea brought up, and I don't believe anybody should be gagged by the majority just to expedite a matter.

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO POSTPONE RECORDED VOTES ON AMENDMENTS IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, AND TO REDUCE TO 5 MINUTES INTERVENING TIME BETWEEN VOTES

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that during further consideration of H.R. 2, pursuant to House Resolution 55, the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may postpone until a time during further consideration in the Committee of the Whole a request for a recorded vote on any amendment, and that the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may reduce to not less than 5 minutes the time for voting by electronic device on any postponed question that immediately follows another vote by electronic device with intervening business, providing that the time for voting by electronic device on the first in any series of questions shall be not less than 15 minutes.

Mr. VOLKMER. Reserving the right to object, and I do not plan to object, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to know if this has been covered or at least discussed with the minority to make sure there is no objection to it. I think that is everything we were talking about earlier, so on Monday the votes could possibly be postponed until 5 o'clock.

□ 1510

Mr. ARMEY. If the gentleman will yield, yes, this and the ensuing unanimous-consent request I am about to read have both been cleared on both sides of the aisle.

Mr. VOLKMER. Can we hold that up for just a few minutes? Is it possible? I do not want to object, but will the gentleman withdraw at this time for just a few minutes?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FOLEY). The request is considered as withdrawn.

CONCERN OVER USDA PROPOSED REORGANIZATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska [Mr. BEREUTER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, this Member strongly supports efforts to create a leaner and more efficient Federal Government. Such efforts are long overdue. However, as the U.S. Department of Agriculture moves forward with its reorganization plans, it is critical to keep in mind that reorganization simply for the sake of reorganiz-

ing is inefficient, counterproductive, and often very costly.

The use of reorganization to achieve the appearance of change is certainly not new. This Member quotes from Petronius Arbiter in the year 210 B.C.:

We trained hard * * * but it seemed that every time we were beginning to form up into teams, we would be reorganized. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganizing; and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency, and demoralization.

This Member believes this observation of some 2200 years ago is especially relevant as the U.S. Department of Agriculture considers a reorganization plan for the new Natural Resource Conservation Service [NRCS]. This Member is specifically concerned about the proposed closing of the Mid-West Technical Center located in Lincoln, NE. This technical center has proven to be productive and well-located and this Member is extremely doubtful that the proposed changes are either cost-effective or will bring great efficiency.

In addition to the specific concern, this Member is also concerned that the currently proposed reorganization plan will severely and adversely impact the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The current schedule to finalize plans by May 1, 1995, with implementation of the reorganization set for October 1, 1995, needs to be placed on hold until a reevaluation is completed.

Mr. Speaker, this Member, is concerned that the charge given to the U.S. Department of Agriculture to reduce administrative staff in the Washington, DC office is being implemented in NRCS by moving many of their administrators to the six proposed regional offices. In order to make room in the budget to fund the new regional administrative staffs, the technical experts now located at the technical centers would then be sacrificed. It is this Member's belief that such a move would be very short-sighted and ultimately would undermine the technical capability and reputation of the agency.

The NRCS, formerly known as the Soil Conservation Service, has earned a richly deserved reputation as a highly professional and technically competent agency. Now there appears to be a clear, and not so subtle, trend to diminish the carefully nurtured technical competence of the Service. For example, the proposed plan gives lip service to the need for technical competence while at the same time destroying the very repositories of technical skill and the knowledge, the National Technical Centers [NTC's]. The explanation for dismantling the collective technical expertise of the NRCS is not comforting. The plan calls for the duties of the NTC specialists to be taken over by the States. Yet, the States' budgets are being reduced and the State conservationists do not appear to be enthusiastic about assuming this responsibility.