

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate had passed without amendment a concurrent resolution of the House of the following title:

H. Con. Res. 72. Concurrent resolution providing for an adjournment of the two Houses.

REGARDING THE ETHICS PROCESS IN THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentlewoman from Colorado [Mrs. SCHROEDER] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mrs. SCHROEDER. I thank the Speaker very much for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, I take the floor really rather sadly, because as we get ready to go home for Memorial Day break, I want to talk a bit about a letter that a group of us feel we have been forced to sign, and I think we would like to talk a bit about why we feel that we were forced to sign this letter. We certainly hope something is going to be done about this letter when we come back.

This letter was addressed to both NANCY JOHNSON and JIM MCDERMOTT, care of the Committee on Ethics, and it is about the issue of the pending matters in front of the Committee on Ethics that appear, according to news printed stores, to be in deadlock.

You know, we started this year with the big check, the big check that we saw from Rupert Murdoch going to the Speaker for \$4.5 million. And then, all of a sudden the Speaker said oh, no, no, no, we tore up that deal, and it is only going to be \$1, and he would not sign the contract until there was some agreement with the Committee on Ethics about this.

Well, we still have not heard anything from the Committee on Ethics that this has been approved, and yet today we saw announcements that he was going off on a 35 city tour come August break, sponsored, I assume, by the same company that is doing the book. And there are an awful lot of issues around that.

Congressman DOGGETT and I are going to talk a bit about this, because I think one of the real resources we have in this House is the gentleman from Texas, who I believe was not only on the supreme court, but was head of the Committee on Ethics.

Mr. DOGGETT. If the gentlewoman will yield, I do approach this whole issue from a little different perspective from some of my colleagues who have been here for a longer time, coming here new, having at the beginning of this year just finished up a 6-year period on the Texas Supreme Court, chairing its Ethics Task Force, wanting to be sure that this process is fair to the Speaker or to anyone else who might be accused in this body of ethical lapse, ethical wrongdoing.

I have not participated in any of the earlier letters or the press conferences, because it had been my hope that this ethics process, which is set up to be a nonpartisan and I think has been nonpartisan in the past, would operate, would provide due process.

Yet almost from the outset, the response to the complaints that have been filed there from the Speaker has been one of attempting, instead of really providing a reasonable defense, has been one of attacking the accuser, even to the point of intimidation, of saying well, we will pass legislation here that would require anyone who complains about ethics to pay the attorney's fees of the person against whom the complaint is made.

That seems to me to be the kind of special legislation that serves to intimidate, rather than to clarify and to ensure that this House meets the highest ethical standards that I think this Nation has a right to demand.

Then, leaving and entrusting this responsibility to the Committee on Ethics, we were first told they were just too busy, because they had their contract on America and they did not have time to look at the contract with Rupert Murdoch; that there was not time enough to pass the contract and consider that other contract, that \$4.5 million book deal that was looming out there. They did not have time to consider that.

So we waited through the 100 days for the contract to be passed, and justice was really delayed. Then the congressional recess came along. Well, we are taking a little vacation. We do not have time to look at these very serious ethical charges against the Speaker over the book deal because of the fact that we are on recess. So justice was again delayed.

Now apparently justice is going to be delayed through another congressional recess with the chair of the committee saying that it will be sometime after Memorial Day, and I would inquire of the gentlewoman, apparently there is some discussion in the Washington Post that there is a deadlock and the goal may be justice delayed, justice denied by never giving us an answer on these very serious charges that we wanted the Speaker to have due process. But process is due now to respond to these charges, is it not?

Mrs. SCHROEDER. I thank the gentleman for his insight on this, because you are fresher from the outside, having dealt with these issues in other forums. I must say to those of us who have more gray hair and have been around this is puzzling, because for those of us on the inside, we have no idea whether this is justice denied or delayed, or is this justice totally deadlocked.

If it is totally deadlocked, and again we do not know, because all of these hearings are in secret and we only know what we read in the paper, if it is totally deadlocked, how do we move this off dead center? How does any-

thing go forward? Does this then become a way that our ethics rules mean nothing if there is real deadlock? Does deadlock give you the right to go ahead and do anything you want to then?

So I am a little perplexed.

Mr. DOGGETT. May I inquire of the gentlewoman, since I am new to this body, concerning the way these matters have been handled in this House before? This is not the first Speaker against whom charges have been made, nor is it the first Member of this House against whom charges have been made. When those kind of events have happened in the past, might you inform the House today and the American people about how the House has assured that there would not be a biased investigation?

The Speaker charges bias, he says these are all politically motivated charges. Can you tell us what the best way is to get at those charges and determine whether they are blessed or whether they represent a selling of public office?

Mrs. SCHROEDER. The gentleman from Texas makes a very good point. Obviously, the Committee on Ethics is half and half of each party. No matter what the makeup on this floor is, it is half and half.

There have been some serious charges, as we all know, and we are not happy about them, but there have been serious charges in the past against major and senior Members around here, and everyone I remember, from the late 1970's on, ended up getting an outside counsel, because the idea was we needed to get it out of here.

I think if you flipped it and we stopped talking about how personal it was here, if you moved it from under this dome and took it to the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue and said that the President had some problems with his Cabinet or himself and he said he would let his own people decide that, that would not work. So they get outside counsel, too. In every prior case I remember getting outside, independent counsel when there has been someone of the gravitas of the Speaker.

I would also think that everybody always says these motives are politically driven, or whatever. I do not know if they are or are not. It would seem to me if you are so sure they were that politically motivated and there was nothing to them, you would be more happy to get an outside counsel, because that would then clear the air once and for all.

Mr. DOGGETT. If the gentlewoman will yield, if the real concern, the real motivation were to get away from politics and really get to the bottom and find out if public office has been sold, whether it was for \$4.5 million or whatever the amount involved, whether there had been abuse of public office, whether there had been a violation of the ethics standards that the American people have every right to demand that this body, all the Members of this body, Democrat and Republican alike,