

tried. We have spent over 50 hours and, as far as I am concerned, everyone was there in good faith. The discussions were long, frank, and candid. In fact, I read about a lot of them in the Washington Post. If I had missed all the meetings, I would have known all about them because they were fairly accurate renditions of what happened. It was in four installments. It did not have everything in there, but almost.

I think the basic problem is just this fundamental difference we have on each side of the aisle on the role of Government and giving power back to the States, letting the Governors and legislatures, whether it is on welfare or Medicaid, make the decisions, and whether or not we should have tax cuts for families with children—not for the rich, but for families with children. I must say, in that area both the President and the Republicans have a tax credit. So it is not that we think tax credits are bad. We cap ours. The President caps his. We are trying to get the package together. We also know we are not going to be successful unless we deal with entitlements. Everybody will recognize, including the entitlement commission, which was chaired by Senator KERREY of Nebraska and Senator Danforth of Missouri, who recognized that entitlements were out of hand and needed to be addressed. If we do not do something to preserve and strengthen Medicare, it is going to be in real trouble in a few years.

So if there is movement—again, I say this without any criticism—I think the movement has to come from the President. We have indicated many, many times that we have moved substantially on the Republican side, whether it was on Medicare or Medicaid, or whether it was the earned income tax credit, or whether it was tax reductions. All those four programs we put in a little box and we have indicated how much we have come in the President's direction and how little he has come in our direction.

So if there is to be an agreement—and I say it as fairly as I can—I think the President needs to make a response. Until that happens, I do not see any real reason to sit down for additional meetings. There is still an opportunity and still some glimmer of hope, as I said.

With reference to the continuing resolution, which is currently funding Government, it does expire at the end of this week. I do not find much support, as I travel around the country, for another Government shutdown. We can point our fingers at the President for vetoing three major appropriations bills, which would have put nearly every one of the workers back to work. He can point his finger at us saying we permitted the Government to shut down.

I think the American people really do not understand. They do not like it. I know the Federal employees do not like it, and others do not know why we pay people for not working, although

in this case the Federal employees were willing workers and were prepared to go to work.

Our response this week is clear: Keep faith with our principles and keep our word to the American people and also to keep faith with Federal employees who should not be the pawns in this game, I think, as the Washington Post said in an editorial 2, 3, or 4 weeks ago.

That is what we have coming up this week. The President will address the Congress and the American people tomorrow night on the State of the Union. I think I will respond to that. I think that will happen.

Then, as far as I know, if we can work it out, there will be no votes the remainder of the week. We will let Members know on each side. I will discuss this with the Democratic leader, Senator DASCHLE. Then we will also outline plans for the next week and the week after that as we go into February.

PROVIDING FOR THE STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Senate Concurrent Resolution 39, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GRAMS). The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 39) providing for the State of the Union Address by the President of the United States.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the concurrent resolution?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the concurrent resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the concurrent resolution.

The concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 39) was agreed to, as follows:

S. CON. RES. 39

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That the two Houses of Congress assemble in the Hall of the House of Representatives on Tuesday, January 23, 1996, at 9 p.m., for the purpose of receiving such communication as the President of the United States shall be pleased to make to them.

Mr. DOLE. I move to reconsider that motion, and I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 1 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 5 minutes each.

AGRICULTURE CONCERNS

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, one of the things that I learned when I was back in my State was that there is serious concern in the agriculture community about the failure to have a farm bill in place before this new crop season begins.

Already, farmers are having to make decisions about the kinds of activity that they will pursue on their lands this year, and without the guidance of the provisions as to agriculture programs from the Government, a lot are put in a position of having to guess and to simply operate on the basis of faith in the fact that Government might come to some agreement on agriculture programs sometime this crop year.

It was one of the casualties of the veto by the President of the Balanced Budget Act that we do not have in place now commodity programs to guide our agriculture producers in making their decisions. Lenders are reluctant to make loans for funds to begin the operations of this crop year without that same kind of certainty, as well.

What I am suggesting is that another high priority for legislative action, as soon as possible, in addition to the conference report on the defense authorization bill mentioned by our majority leader, is action on a farm bill, or action that will put in place some temporary arrangement for income protection, the other provisions that are usually found in commodity programs in the Agriculture Act.

One suggestion that I know is being discussed today among House and Senate Members is whether or not this continuing resolution that could come over from the House include provisions of the Balanced Budget Act as they pertain to the agriculture programs. That is something that is being discussed.

I do not know how that will come out in terms of trying to get bipartisan agreement. I support that. We have passed that twice now in the House and in the Senate. It was part of the Balanced Budget Act sent to the President. I hope we can come to some resolution of this. I urge the Senate and particularly those on our Committee on Agriculture to weigh in with their thoughts and advice and counsel on this subject so we can reach a decision at the earliest possible time.

We will put at risk, Mr. President, a lot of farmers all over the country—not just in my State but all over the country—who do not know what the program is going to be. Is there going to be a program? The Secretary says he will implement himself a rice program if no action is taken by the Congress. In my State, that is an important commodity. What is the program going to be? We do not know.

I think it is an obligation, and it would be a very serious act of irresponsibility if this Congress does not soon settle on a farm program for this crop

year, put it in place in the statute book, and let this agriculture sector of ours, which has become so productive and so important to our national pride, continue to flourish and to do so in an environment of partnership with the Federal Government to make sure that it continues to be a successful part of our national economy.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I came to the floor to speak about a number of issues. I ask unanimous consent to be allowed to proceed for 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

FARM PROGRAM

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, the statement by the Senator from Mississippi is absolutely correct. I do not agree with the conclusion that we ought to include the provisions that were in the last Balanced Budget Act as to the next farm plan, but I certainly agree with him that this Congress owes a decision on what kind of a farm program we will have for the family farmers in this country—not just the family farmers, but especially for them—for the lenders, for the agribusinesses that rely on them. They need to understand as they head toward spring planting what kind of a farm program do we have in this country.

We did not enact a 5-year farm plan last year. There are a lot of reasons for that. We do owe them, it seems to me, a response; if nothing else, an expanded and accelerated debate now to try to figure out what we could agree on for a decent farm program. I support that, although the Senate will not be in session with votes for some days and some weeks, perhaps, so that may not be possible.

It will be my intention tomorrow to introduce a piece of legislation in the Senate to extend the current farm program for 1 year and provide some additional flexibility for planting decisions by farmers in that extension and, additionally, to provide forgiveness for some of the advance deficiency payments for those farmers who suffered a crop failure last year.

I do not necessarily think the best solution is to extend the previous farm program or the current farm program, but it is a solution that is preferable to doing nothing. I do believe we owe an answer to farmers, to their lenders, to agribusinesses and others, and I appreciate the Senator from Mississippi raising the issue.

All of us have a responsibility to work together to provide some certainty. My best guess is that the way to provide certainty at this point would be to extend the current farm program for 1 year, then during this year to have a substantial debate about what kind of farm policy we want in the future, for Republicans and Democrats to reach some consensus and agreement, and then move forward with it.

Again, I share most of the issues and concerns expressed by the Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. DORGAN. I am happy to yield to the Senator.

Mr. COCHRAN. Will the Senator yield for a response?

Mr. DORGAN. I will be happy to yield.

Mr. COCHRAN. I appreciate the kind comments of the Senator from North Dakota. I just want to say, too, I agree with him that some changes are indicated. We just do not want the status quo. I think we can do better than the status quo. There is too much insistence on the status quo right now from the administration on a number of subject areas, vetoing a number of initiatives for change and for improvement of programs.

We have some very good improvements in the agriculture programs included in that Balanced Budget Act, and to just say that we are not going to consider that I think would be a big mistake. So I was heartened by the comments the Senator made about the fact that he would suggest in his legislation changes for more flexibility, for more sensitivity to the realities of the current situation in agriculture. We have had a lot of changes. We have had higher commodity prices in a number of areas. But we do need to get on with it.

I applaud the Senator and assure him that my interest, this Senator's interest, is working in a positive way to reach agreement so we can put it in place. I am glad he is going to introduce legislation along that line.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I have never indicated that I do not believe there are changes that are necessary. There are changes needed. The current farm program is frightfully complicated. It has the Government hip deep in trying to tell farmers where to plant, what to plant, and when to plant. We can have, in my judgment, a much better farm program that has much greater flexibility for producers.

I do not like the so-called Freedom To Farm Act in terms of where it leaves us after 7 years, because my fear is we are in a situation, then, where there is no safety net at all and when international prices drop and stay down, family farmers just get washed away. That is my major concern. But there are some aspects of the plan that was put in the reconciliation bill which I could support. Flexibility is one of them. So I hope we can get together and have a thoughtful debate and do this the right way. Republicans and Democrats can join hands here and reach a common solution.

A BUDGET COMPROMISE

Mr. DORGAN. I did want to mention a couple of other points on the floor today. This is a new year. It is January. I hope all of us have thought

through some New Year's resolutions, one of which ought to be for all of us in the Congress, both in the House and the Senate, and for all of us on both sides of the political aisle, to see if we cannot, in 1996, solve problems rather than create problems.

It has been a year in which we have had shutdowns, threatened defaults, and chaos, and a year in which there were days when this looked a lot more like a food fight than it did serious legislating in the U.S. Congress. I think most of us coming back would believe it would serve the country's interests if there were less rancor, if there were a little more understanding, and if we turned down the volume just a bit.

It does not mean that these are not very important issues that are being debated. But it does mean you cannot, in a democracy, create a situation where you say, "Here is the way we approach our legislative duties. You are all wrong, and we are all right." That does not make sense. That is not the way it works. One side is not all right and the other side is not all wrong. There are good ideas on both sides of the political aisle. But you cannot, in this process, say it is all or nothing, it is our way or no way, and we have seen too much of that in 1995.

Both political parties, in my judgment, contribute to the well-being of this country. I have said it a dozen times and I will say it again: The Republicans do this country a service by advancing and continuing to push on the issue of Federal deficits. The Democrats do a service to this country by saying, yes, let us balance the budget, let us deal with the deficit, but let us also worry about the priorities, let us worry about a program like Medicare, which is important to low-income elderly people in this country. Both sides do us a service. But we ought to, it seems to me, be willing to engage in more thoughtful discussion about how we get the best from each rather than ending up with the worst of both.

Most of all, we ought not be in a circumstance in January 1996, again, in which we see another Government shutdown. That, it seems to me, pokes taxpayers in the eye by saying to taxpayers, "We are going to insist you pay for work that we prevent from being completed," and dangles Federal workers out there on the end of a string saying, "You are the pawns in this dispute we have about the Federal budget."

The majority leader talked about the budget debate. He did so, in my judgment, in very thoughtful terms. I just want to respond to a couple of points.

If you simply took the offers of the Republicans and the Democrats that were last laid on the table in these negotiations and said we will accept the least savings in each of these categories offered by either Republicans or Democrats, and just took the lowest amount of savings from each proposal, you end up in 7 years with \$711 billion in savings. That is sufficient to balance the budget, if you simply take the