

us from mandating an auction of the spectrum which belongs to the taxpayers.

The estimates are that this spectrum is worth somewhere around \$30 billion—"b," billion dollars. Now we are going to accept language which is exactly what the broadcasters wanted.

In exchange for it, we get letters. We get letters which have no standing in law, which have no standing anywhere. I have grown a bit cynical in the years that I have spent here in Congress, not to recognize what is happening.

I can only speak for people on this side of the aisle about our philosophy of the role of Government. When something is owned by the taxpayer and is of great value and we are facing debts of incredible proportions, \$4, \$5 trillion, annual deficits of \$150 billion, and we have a way of taking that very valuable commodity that is owned by the taxpayers and auctioning it off, and now we are being prevented basically from doing so—despite the fig leaf of these letters—I think it is a very sad day. Because in this legislation the broadcasters are well represented. The taxpayers of America are not represented at all.

So, as we adopt this legislation, and these letters, which I could describe in somewhat graphic terms but will not—they are entered into the RECORD—let us have no illusions about what is happening here. What is happening here is the odds are the taxpayers of America will never receive that \$30 billion in return for the auctioning off of a commodity which they own.

Mr. President, I had a lot of problems with the telecommunications bill, as is well known here. I proposed numerous amendments which were defeated. But all of them pale in comparison to what we are talking about here, especially since we already have proof, with a \$682 million auction of a small amount of spectrum that took place a couple of weeks ago, of the value which we are not addressing in this legislation today.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. DOLE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I first want to thank the Senator from Arizona for his statement. I can assure him that if the FCC means what they say in the letter, "only pursuant to additional legislation it may adopt resolving this issue"—I think both the Senator from Arizona and the Senator from Kansas are going to be around. And there will not be any legislation unless it resolves the issue fairly for the American taxpayer.

I think this is very important. I know there are Members on each side of the aisle who are concerned about it. It is not a partisan issue. Here we are, trying to balance the budget, cutting welfare, cutting other programs, and about to give a big handout here to the rich, the powerful.

We have not seen a single story on any of the networks about this issue.

We see a lot of stories on the networks about some Member of Congress going somewhere on a "junket," they always like to say on the networks. But I have not seen anybody, except for CNN, not a single story on what could be the biggest giveaway of the century—not one.

I think we could have done better in the discussions, myself, yesterday.

I talked to the Speaker, and the Speaker said, "You got rolled." Everybody got rolled. But that is history. It will not happen again. I think this is a very important issue. You will not see it on television. You will not see it on the networks. You probably will not see it in any newspaper that owns television because this affects them. We should not raise things, in effect, for the rich and the powerful.

So I appreciate the concerns expressed, and we will continue to pursue this matter.

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, will the majority leader yield for a comment?

Mr. DOLE. I am happy to yield.

Mr. McCAIN. I want to thank the majority leader for his efforts on the spectrum auction. It would have sailed right through, because the fix was in. Had it not been for his efforts—I am sorry that he was out of town yesterday. I am sorry that we did not get, as the leader said, a better deal.

The thing I worry about, of course, is that with the present language in the bill, which should have been stripped out, next year sometime someone will sue and go to court with the FCC and force the FCC to be in compliance with the law that we are about to pass today. That is what I worry about.

But I do want to thank the majority leader sincerely for his efforts for bringing this issue to the attention at least to the print media. As the majority leader mentioned, we will not see this story on any television or hear it on any radio broadcast because it directly affects them.

But I want to thank the majority leader for his efforts. I take in good faith his commitment for us to try to get it up. I just know that the forces that are represented—the special interests here in Washington—have won. I regret it because it is the American taxpayer who now may be losing \$30 billion. If we had done the right thing and stripped that language out of the bill, there was no chance that anything else would have happened.

I thank the majority leader for his efforts.

AGRICULTURAL MARKET TRANSITION ACT OF 1996

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, what is the pending business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion.

Mr. DOLE. I ask unanimous consent that the pending cloture vote be temporarily laid aside.

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

THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS BILL

Mr. DOLE. I think the managers on each side of the aisle are here. We do not want to take a lot of time. We are trying to work out something on the agriculture bill, a bipartisan solution, if you please. Senator LUGAR, Senator LEAHY, and others on both sides have been active. We had a meeting in Senator DASCHLE's office, including myself, Senator DASCHLE, Senator LEAHY, and Senator LUGAR. We believe there can be a resolution. But rather than keep people here late, late tonight, we would like to move ahead and have the debate on the telecommunications conference report.

I understand that is agreeable to the Senators from South Dakota and South Carolina. I think there is a need to get consent on the other side of the aisle before we can proceed. There is no time limit. We hope to get an hour or two for a time limit. We said we cannot get that at the present time. But we would like to ask consent—I will not make the request now, but if we can get it cleared, I would simply ask consent that, notwithstanding the absence of official papers, the Senate now turn to the consideration of the conference report to accompany S. 652, the telecommunications bill, and the conference report be considered read.

That would just permit us to go ahead and have the debate.

I ask unanimous consent, notwithstanding the absence of official papers—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. HARKIN addressed the Chair.

Mr. DOLE. I have not made the request yet. I will repeat what I said and make the request.

Mr. HARKIN. I understand that there is a consent request to move right now to the conference report on the telecommunications bill. Mr. President, I ask that the bill be read.

Several Senators addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader has not yet finished the request.

Mr. DOLE. Let me repeat the request.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, will the distinguished majority leader yield for a moment?

Mr. DOLE. Yes.

THE FARM BILL

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, without going into the issue of the telecommunications bill—which I will not—I just want to emphasize what the distinguished majority leader said. As my colleagues know, he, I, and some others had an amendment at the desk. We would have voted cloture under normal circumstances. Following the first cloture vote today, the distinguished majority leader, the distinguished Democratic leader, Senator LUGAR, and I have met. I want to emphasize one thing.