There was no objection.

APPOINTMENT OF ADDITIONAL CONFEREES ON H.R. 2400, BUILDING EFFICIENT SURFACE TRANSPORTATION AND EQUITY ACT OF 1998

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following conferees on H.R. 2400.

As additional conferees from the Committee on the Budget, for consideration of title VII and title X of the House bill and modifications committed to conference:

Messrs. PARKER, RADANOVICH, and SPRATT.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will notify the Senate of the change in conferees.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained in my district yesterday, May 5, due to official business. As a result, I missed rollcall vote numbers 122 through 126.

However, had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall 122; aye on rollcall number 123; aye on rollcall number 124; aye on rollcall number 125; and aye on rollcall number 126.

□ 2300

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GILCHREST). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RUSH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. RUSH addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. ISTOOK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. ISTOOK addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I think it is important after the conclusion of today's debate on the Higher Education Act and specifically the debate that we had on both the Riggs and Campbell amendment to assess where we are and what that means. I am very pleased that the debate was not acrimonious but it was truthful. It expresses, I think, the overall commitment of this House to what really is equal opportunity and particularly in higher education.

Many times as we have debated the questions of affirmative action and equal opportunity, many voices would raise in citation of the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, that we should be judged not by the color of our skin but by the character within. Those words distort the value and the purpose of affirmative action and equal opportunity. For there is no doubt that we all strive to an even playing field. That even playing field has not arrived, for those who would argue that an amendment that would eliminate the ability to outreach and affirmatively act upon recruiting and soliciting minority students and women to institutions of higher learning deny the existence of past discrimination and existing discrimination.

The Riggs amendment and the Campbell amendment were likewise misdirected and distorted. My good colleague from California rose to the floor of the House and cited an example of the SAT scores. He started with a score in an Asian student that may have had a score of 760. He cited the score of a white student, an Hispanic student, and he concluded with a score of an African-American student of 510 on the SATs. With that pronouncement, he proceeded to discuss the fact of why there should be any extra special effort to ensure that those students who did not have the higher scores be able to attend institutions of higher learning. I have an answer for him. What is the high moral ground? What does this country stand for? Does it suggest that students who do not have the money to pay to go to institutions of higher learning should become or remain uneducated, foolish, untrainable, the door of opportunity should be closed? Does it mean those students who live in rural America who might have a hard time getting transportation to institutions of higher learning, the door should be closed? In every instance, we reach out to try to help those who need the extra help, to get the promise of what America stands for. Both the Riggs amendment and the Campbell amendment missed the boat on what is right and what is the high moral ground.

We will continue to have these debates. We have an election in Seattle. We recently had an election in Houston, Texas where they were attempting to eliminate the affirmative action provisions in minority and small and women-owned businesses. We have had one in California. Unfortunately it was, I think, misconstrued by the voters and Proposition 209 passed. But the tragedy of Proposition 209 is evidenced by the sizable diminishing of those students from Hispanic and African-American backgrounds going to institutions of higher learning. We defeated Proposition A in Houston recognizing that once you understood what affirmative action actually stands for, affirmatively acting, affirmatively reaching out, affirmatively ensuring equal opportunity, that most Americans will join hands united in recognizing that this is the right way to go. I, too, join in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King. I wish for a society in which all of us are judged by the content of our character. But I do not believe that because you come from a Hispanic background, an African-American background, because you are a woman, because you come from a rural background and you need an extra measure of help that that in any way diminishes your character, suggests that you are not being judged by your character but in fact the color of your skin is negative and so you are being reached out to because of something negative rather than something positive.

Mr. Speaker, I simply hope that time after time these kinds of amendments reach the floor of the House, we will recognize that the right way to go is to some day to reach a point in America where there is no discrimination against Native Americans and Hispanics, African-American, Asians, whites, women, but we have not reached that point.

These amendments take away from what the full promise of this country stands for. I will always stand against them, I will argue with my colleagues and respect them for their difference, but each day I will demand that this House do the right thing.

As I do that, Mr. Speaker, let me also simply conclude by saying I want to join very briefly the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) in his opposition and concern finally for what I think have been misguided efforts and directions in investigations dealing with both Webb Hubbell, Ms. McDougal and the whole proceedings investigating the President.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SMITH of Michigan addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GREEN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GUTKNECHT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)