

I urge the President to take action, to use his good offices with sufficient preparation, as noted in my letter to him of yesterday, for a meeting in the Oval Office. Very few foreign leaders decline meetings in the Oval Office. That should be of the highest priority on the President's agenda, and similarly on the Senate agenda. Consideration and ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty ought to be a very high priority on the Senate's agenda.

Mr. President, in the absence of any other Senator on the floor, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

SECURITY OF ISRAEL

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I have again sought recognition to comment on the issue relating to the conditions which have been set by the U.S. Government on a further meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and the difference of opinion of what is adequate to handle the security interests of the State of Israel. It is my view that it was inappropriate and counterproductive for the U.S. Government to deliver what I consider to be an ultimatum to Prime Minister Netanyahu that he accept the further redeployment of Israeli forces as a precondition to come to Washington to meet with the President on last Monday, May 11.

Secretary of State Albright briefed a number of Senators yesterday in a room, S. 407, where we have secret discussions, and at that time the Secretary of State said that she had not delivered an ultimatum but instead had stated conditions which would have to be met before the United States would continue to carry forward with the peace process on the current track.

I responded to the Secretary of State that I thought it wasn't even a difference of semantics to say that a condition on further discussions did not constitute an ultimatum, that in fact it was clearly an ultimatum in those discussions.

If the diplomacy is carried out in a quiet way, so be it. But when diplomacy is carried out publicly and where the Prime Minister of another country is put in the position where the Prime Minister has to back down, it seems to me totally counterproductive and unlikely to produce a result where there will be agreement or compliance even if Prime Minister Netanyahu had wanted to do that.

When it comes to the question of the security interests of Israel, I do not believe that anybody can second-guess the security interests of Israel except

the Israelis and their Government. The view from the Potomac is a lot different than the view from the Jordan River as it has been said on many, many occasions. And Israel has been fighting more than 100 million Arabs for more than 50 years. They have won quite a number of wars, but they only have to lose one war before it is all over.

Secretary of Defense William Cohen appeared today before the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, and I asked the Secretary of Defense whether he or anybody in his department had carried out an analysis as to the adequacy of security for Israel if Israel agreed to the proposal of the administration. I commented in the course of that question that I would not think, even if the United States had made that kind of a determination, it would be binding and might not even be relevant as to what Israel thought was necessary for its own security. Secretary of Defense Cohen said that no such analysis had been made on his part. But it would seem to me that as an indispensable prerequisite for the U.S. Government to take a position that Israel ought to have certain withdrawal at least there ought to be a professional determination that the withdrawal would be consistent with Israel's security interests. But as I say, the Secretary of Defense had not undertaken that kind of an analysis.

I submit that the issue of Israel's security is something that has to be judged by the Government of Israel. There is no doubt about the friendship and support of President Clinton's administration for Israel. I do not question that for a minute. But where you have the negotiations at a very, very critical point and public statements are made as a precondition which is realistically viewed an ultimatum, pure and simple, that is totally wholly inappropriate. It is my hope that these peace negotiations can be put back on track. I know that the Secretary of State is going to be meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu later today. The Appropriations Committee has a meeting scheduled with Prime Minister Netanyahu tomorrow. I hope we can find our way through these negotiations and put the peace negotiations back on track.

I think it is a very difficult matter because while the administration is pressing Israel for a certain level of withdrawal, there are many items which are not being taken care of by the Palestinian authority.

Last year, Prime Minister Netanyahu had said that Arafat had given a green light to certain terrorist activities by the Palestinian Authority. And when Secretary of State Albright was before the Foreign Operations Subcommittee, I asked the question as to whether there had been, in fact, a green light given by Chairman Arafat, as charged by Prime Minister Netanyahu. Secretary of State Albright made the statement that it wasn't a green light, but there wasn't a red light either.

I think it is mandatory that the Palestinian Authority give such a red light. They cannot be guarantors, but a red light and their maximum effort to stop terrorism is required. Under the provisions of an amendment introduced by Senator SHELBY and myself, that kind of a maximum effort against terrorism is a precondition for getting any aid from the United States.

So, these matters are obviously delicate. They require a lot of diplomatic tact. It is my hope that the current stalemate can be surmounted, but I think it can be surmounted only if there is a recognition, as former Secretary of State Warren Christopher had, that security is a matter for the discretion of Israel—it is Israel's security—and that no ultimatum be issued, or at least no precondition be issued, before the Prime Minister of Israel can proceed to have a meeting or negotiations with the United States.

In the absence of any other Senator on the floor seeking recognition, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COATS). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUES ENDORSES FAIR MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, President Clinton and Democrats in Congress strongly support a fair increase in the minimum wage. The economy is in a period of record growth. The stock markets are at an all time high. Unemployment continues to fall to its lowest level in a quarter century. Yet, too many workers on the bottom rungs of the economic ladder are not receiving their fair share of this prosperity.

Most Americans recognize that the minimum wage is not yet a living wage. According to an April NBC/Wall Street Journal Poll, 79 percent of those questioned support an increase.

Time and again, opponents state that increases in the minimum wage are harmful to the economy, and especially harmful to minority communities. But such statements have no basis in fact, as the current evidence makes clear.

In his recent "To Be Equal" column published in over 300 African-American newspapers across the country, Hugh Price, President of the National Urban League, strongly endorses the increase in the minimum wage that many of us have proposed, from its current level of \$5.15 an hour to \$5.65 an hour on January 1, 1999 and to \$6.15 an hour on January 1, 2000. The National Urban League has played a prominent role in the civil rights community for over 80 years. Its 114 affiliates in 34 states and the District of Columbia are at the forefront of the battle for economic and social justice for all Americans.