

nations that will suffer the consequence. It is easy for Prince Charles to oppose GMOs.

We find ourselves in a short supply-and-demand situation where consumers are basically saying: We don't want our farmers and ranchers to produce less than what we want. We don't want to be short of food. We don't want prices to go up too high. We have a policy—it is especially true with large processors—where processors not only want prices to be stable but prefer prices to be in the lower range, if possible. That is always good business. You try to keep your costs under control. If we overproduce, the prices are always going to be on a downward pressure.

This legislation, the Risk Management for the 21st Century Act, allows the continuation of the development of products that are offered to farmers to manage the risks of price declines and revenue losses coming from changes in the market over which they have no control.

The Senator from North Dakota talked about currency fluctuations at great length when we discussed trade agreements and trying to get something in trade agreements that allow us to accommodate the sort of things that we saw after NAFTA with the peso decline. We found ourselves at a significant disadvantage as a consequence. These currency declines can have a tremendous impact on the earning ability of our farmers. It is a risk that the farmers of America have to manage.

In this new and improved crop insurance proposal, we will have an increased likelihood, in my view, that market-oriented products will enable a producer to manage the risk of loss of income due to unexpected and uncontrolled declines in their income associated with price declines. Also, those products will be developed and available to the market. Not only do we increase the subsidies and make it more likely that people will buy, but we also provide risk-minded options. We make changes in the existing crop program. Key among them is we restructure the risk management agency to make it more likely that products will be brought to market more quickly. It is more likely to be market-oriented as well.

My hope is that we can move this legislation—as Chairman LUGAR and Senator ROBERTS have indicated, and earlier Senator HARKIN spoke, and we could not have developed this piece of legislation without the distinguished ranking member as well—and pass a good, strong bill that is beneficial to all regions of the country so that it is more likely to come out of conference as a bill that is closer to what the Senate has. The House, as I said, does not have many of the provisions that the Northeastern Senators have been talking about. We did in ours. My hope is that we can pass this piece of legislation with a large influence and in a positive way for the conference.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, we have had an hour of general debate and discussion.

On behalf of the leader, I would now like to offer a unanimous consent request.

I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to Calendar No. 464, S. 2251, the crop insurance bill, and it be considered under the following time agreement:

One amendment to be offered by the managers limited to 10 minutes and not subject to second-degree amendments and no budget points of order be in order prior to the disposition of the managers' amendment, and for the purposes of complying with section 204 of H. Con. Res. 68, the bill, as amended by the managers' amendment, be considered as the committee-reported bill:

Two relevant first-degree amendments in order to be offered by the majority leader, or his designee;

Two relevant first-degree amendments in order to be offered by the minority leader, or his designee;

That those first-degree amendments be subject to relevant second-degree amendments;

That all amendments except where noted be limited to 30 minutes equally divided in the usual form;

That no motions to commit or recommit the bill be in order;

And following disposition of the above-described amendments and use or yielding back of debate time, the bill be advanced to third reading.

I further ask unanimous consent that following third reading of the bill, the Senate proceed to the House companion bill, H.R. 2559, and all after the enacting clause be stricken, the text of S. 2251, as amended, if amended, be inserted, the bill be advanced to third reading and passage occur all without any intervening action or debate.

I finally ask unanimous consent that following passage, the Senate insist on its amendment, request a conference with the House, the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees on the part of the Senate, and the Senate bill be placed back on the calendar.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I object.

If I could just explain for a moment, we have been working closely with a number of our colleagues, I understand, on a bipartisan basis from the Northeast who want to be able to offer an amendment. I know at least in some cases they haven't had the opportunity to see the bill until yesterday. So they have asked for our indulgence in working with them to see if we can accommodate their needs. I have indicated a willingness to do that.

I noted to Senator LOTT just a few minutes ago that we are close to reach-

ing a procedural arrangement whereby that could be done. I am hopeful that we will be able to get that agreement sometime shortly. I have no objection to proceeding to the bill. We could certainly do that.

Earlier, a suggestion was made and a unanimous consent request I think was offered which would allow us to go to the bill for general debate only. As I understand it, that was objected to. But whether we go to the bill without an agreement or go to the bill and seek a unanimous consent that would allow for a general debate, either of those approaches would work.

I hope that by the end of the day we can get a unanimous consent agreement that would spell out in more detail, as perhaps the chairman has suggested, an amendment list. As I said, we are close. I certainly have no objection myself to moving forward, as he has suggested. I want to accommodate Senators who have been working in good faith to try to find a way in which to amend the bill, and they should be prepared to do that before the end of the day.

I will object at this time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAPO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, I had hoped to come to the floor today in support of the long-awaited, long-anticipated crop insurance reform bill. My colleagues, Senators ROBERTS and KERREY, have toiled over this legislation, laboring to ensure that the risk management activities America's farmers will undertake are fair, affordable, and comprehensive.

Instead, I understand that a few of our Democratic colleagues have placed a hold on the bill, while ironically, an editorial in the Washington Post this morning decries the 1996 Freedom to Farm Act and the very legislation I had hoped would pass today.

Mr. President, nearly every major commodity group in the nation supports the Roberts/Kerrey bill and have, through the voices of their membership, called upon us to act. Instead of working to pass crop insurance legislation growers from across the country have been anxiously awaiting, we instead find ourselves once again defending the principles of freedom to farm.

To use America's farmers as a pawn in an election year political game, at a time when the agriculture economy is in a serious state of flux, in my opinion invalidates their plight. When we should be passing comprehensive, bipartisan legislation that enhances the

safety net for American farmers, we instead find ourselves fighting to address a bill the farming community nearly overwhelmingly desires.

As of late, farmers in the Pacific Northwest have found themselves in this same game far too often. At the same time the Administration sends officials out to Washington state claiming to provide solutions to these serious issues, regulators under the Clinton-Gore watch are working to eliminate the water, transportation infrastructure, chemicals, and in general the tools necessary for farmers to continue their livelihood.

Last week, the Washington Association of Wheat Growers made the 3,000 mile trip to Washington, DC to encourage me to support the crop insurance reform we were supposed to address today. At a time when check books barely balance, fuel prices are outrageously high, while commodity prices are low, these folks asked for our help. Unfortunately today, these proud and previously profitable growers must wait. They must wait for several folks on the other side of the aisle to make a political monster of crop insurance before they can receive this desired reform.

Mr. President, when the Risk Management for the 21st Century Act finally comes before us here in the Senate, I will support the efforts of Senators ROBERTS and KERREY, of the Senate Agriculture Committee, and of those voices in rural America who demand crop insurance reform.

RISK MANAGEMENT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY ACT

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to Calendar No. 464, S. 2251, the crop insurance bill, and that it be considered under the following agreement: First, an amendment to be offered by the managers, limited to 10 minutes and not subject to second-degree amendments, and no budget points of order be in order prior to the disposition of the managers' amendment, and for the purposes of complying with section 204 of H. Con. Res. 68, the bill, as amended by the managers' amendment, be considered as the committee reported bill.

Parenthetically, the amendment offered by the distinguished Senators from New York and New Jersey would be a part of that managers' amendment.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. LUGAR. Yes.

Mr. SCHUMER. I first thank the Senator on behalf of myself and the Senators from New Jersey, Rhode Island, all of us, as well as the other members of the committee. This is an extremely important amendment to all of us. I ask the Senator, will the Senate in the conference do everything it can to keep the language and the amount of money we have agreed to?

Mr. LUGAR. I am sure the Senate will argue the merits of the Senators' suggestions as well as the rest of the managers' amendment, and whatever else transpires, with vigor.

Mr. SCHUMER. I thank the Senator, again, for understanding our particular problems with agriculture in the Northeast. As the Senator may remember, last fall when disaster struck, we were unable to protect our farmers. Being allowed to be included in the crop insurance program for specialty crops such as fruits and vegetables is extremely important. We are very appreciative of those efforts that were made.

I yield to the Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. TORRICELLI. Mr. President, I thank the chairman. I am certain he understands many of us believe that the long, slow erosion of the agricultural community in the Northeast must come to an end. Those who are engaged in specialty crops and other products in New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and other States have suffered very badly in recent years.

I think the agreement we have come to is of some real note. That is, this isn't simply an agricultural crop insurance program; it is now a national program. For the first time in my experience, we have reached across the Nation's borders, coast to coast, and designed a program that can work for every State. This is a very important moment for the State of New Jersey and preserving those farms that remain. I am grateful and very much appreciate his commitment to fight vigorously in conference so that the Senate provisions prevail. I thank the Senator.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island is recognized.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I commend the Senator from New York and the Senator from New Jersey for their great efforts. I thank the chairman. As my colleague so well expressed, there is a tendency to not realize or understand that the Northeast part of the United States has a significant farming industry. We learned that the hard way, in some respects, last fall when we discovered our farmers were in desperate straits because of drought, loss of crops, and environmental conditions that affected them. Today, we are recognizing their standing along with farmers throughout this country, and not only their need but their eligibility now for Federal assistance in times of need. I thank the chairman for his efforts, and I thank my colleagues for working so hard on this.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LUGAR. I thank the Senators from New York, New Jersey, and Rhode Island for their leadership.

Mr. President, can we lock in that part of it?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Has the Senator completed his unanimous consent request?

Mr. LUGAR. No. This is a portion of it. The request is the managers' amendment be offered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, let me proceed.

I further ask unanimous consent that a relevant amendment by the distinguished Senator from Wisconsin, Mr. KOHL, with a time limit of 30 minutes be entertained, and that a statement by Senator KENNEDY of Massachusetts be permitted for not to exceed 30 minutes; that a sense-of-the-Senate amendment be offered by the distinguished Senator from Minnesota, Mr. WELLSTONE, and that one relevant amendment be offered by Senator WELLSTONE.

May I inquire of the Senator if he would permit us to have a 30-minute time limit for each of these two amendments?

Mr. WELLSTONE. First of all, on the time, I have to decide on the second amendment. On the first amendment, it is not my wish to go on and on, but I would not agree to 30 minutes. There were 2,500 to 3,000 farmers, and 500 came from Minnesota. I would like to commend them for the Rally for Rural America, and call on Congress to take some action to deal with the crisis in our rural communities. I don't think I can give justice to what they did in 30 minutes. Other Senators would like to speak as well. I would not agree to only 30 minutes.

The second point I wish to make is that these are agriculture-related amendments. I wish to make sure that is acceptable to my colleague.

Mr. LUGAR. The request that we made to the Chair is that they be relevant to the legislation before us.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I will object to the whole agreement because these amendments are agriculture-related. I don't think they would necessarily be ruled relevant to crop insurance. I can do the sense-of-the-Senate amendment within an hour, I think, basically recognizing and congratulating people for coming and talking about our commitment to take some action. I might not even do a second amendment. Certainly, they are agriculture-related. There isn't anybody in the world who would say that the sense-of-the-Senate is not agriculture-related, dealing with the price crisis. But I thought that would be acceptable. If it technically has to be relevant to crop insurance, that would be out of order. If it is out of order, I will not agree.

Mr. LUGAR. I have to respond to the Senator, on behalf of our leader, Senator LOTT, that it needs to be relevant to the legislation. The Chair might be asked to rule on that or might not be asked to rule on that. I understand the Senator, and I am attempting to be accommodative. The importance of what he has to say is obvious. But if the Senator could achieve both of his objectives within an hour of time, perhaps we could proceed on that basis.