

of Iraq is "not going to be self-financing." Newsweek magazine called these numbers "misleading."

What this means, in plain English, is that U.S. taxpayers are going to get stuck funding the difference for a number of months and for the foreseeable future.

We believe the pattern of secretive and closed bidding for these construction contracts is unacceptable. It seems to me the American people have a right to hear if there are reasons for sole-source and invitation-only contracts for these projects. If something is amiss in the Iraqi reconstruction contracting process, then the oversight and the accountability—as Senator BYRD and I have called for in the legislation accepted tonight—is going to bring that to light. It is high time Congress and the American people arrive at fair judgments about these difficult issues with respect to funding the reconstruction of Iraq. The American people deserve real accountability at a time when we need the money here at home for our schools, for our health care facilities, for our roads, and for the critical needs of strengthening our economy.

I think it is a significant step the Senate has taken. It assures this will now be an effort to establish true oversight and accountability over the billions of dollars that are being spent now and that will be spent with respect to reconstructing Iraq and other services in that country.

I thank Senator BYRD for his patience and assistance in this legislation.

Again, I express my appreciation to Chairman STEVENS for helping us to draft this in a way that will win bipartisan support.

I yield the floor.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period for morning business.

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

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 2555

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that on Monday, July 21, at 1:30 p.m., the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 192, H.R. 2555, the Homeland Security appropriations bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### SENATE BUSINESS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, we have had a full week, a complete week, though it is Thursday evening, and almost 9 o'clock. We will not be in session tomorrow, and we will not have votes on Monday but will proceed to the Homeland Security bill Monday during the day and, hopefully, make progress.

As we look over the course of the week, it has been a full and complete week, with a number of amendments and a lot of debate, a lot of issues. I congratulate members from the Appropriations Committee, the leaders on both sides of the aisle for their leadership, in bringing us to the point that we have now passed three of the appropriations bills.

We will have a busy week next week. We will proceed as far as we can in addressing, hopefully, a number of appropriations bills next week. And then, that following week, which will be the last week we are in session, we will address Energy and, hopefully, complete the Energy bill, which is my intention, before the August recess.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, if the distinguished majority leader will yield?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. I know he has a lot more work to do tonight. I want to say, briefly, before he completes his statement on Prime Minister Blair, and other things, in the National Journal's Congress Daily today, it was brought to my attention that, among other things, it says—and if it is here I am sure it is true; we know all things written are true that the press puts out—

GOP staffers continue to meet in an effort to flesh out a reworking of the bill's electricity provisions. A new proposal expected to be released sometime next week.

The only reason I bring this to the leader's attention this evening is that the bill, as it is, is very difficult. We know there are problems with the electricity section. On both sides of the aisle, people are concerned about it.

If there is going to be a new electricity section in this bill, we have to have it next week because there is tremendous concern, especially by the Senators from Washington. And as we discussed yesterday, there are more than 300 amendments on this matter.

The two leaders are sponsors of one of the main amendments in the bill, and I know the two leaders want to get this bill finished. But having said the two leaders want to finish the bill, we still have 98 other Senators to worry about.

I would hope there is some realization of the great difficulty of finishing this bill, especially if there is a new section to be written about electricity. If it is a section that everybody signs

off on, that would alleviate a tremendously large problem with this bill.

So I just want to say, we have 2 more weeks to go. I think this week, even though I am sure there is some disappointment in the leader in not being able to complete more appropriations bills, we did a monumental task of finishing this bill in the time we did. I think the debate was good. There were no nonrelevant amendments. No points of order had to be raised. So I think we have done good work. But I do not want, by the mere fact that we keep talking about the Energy bill, for anyone to think it is going to be a simple issue to get that completed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I appreciate the comments from the assistant Democratic leader and understand that the task before us is a large one. One of the advantages we have is that we began to address the Energy bill on May 6 of this year. We have spent 12 days on the floor debating the bill. We made good progress on the Energy bill, and by saying we would spend a week, or the last week of this month, focused entirely on that bill, we have given all of our colleagues the opportunity to work—both members on the committee and our colleagues not on the committee—the opportunity to develop amendments, to discuss those amendments, to work in a bipartisan way across the aisle to come to agreement—and not necessarily consensus but agreement—in lots of different areas.

One of the good things about, at least 6 weeks ago, saying and making very clear to our colleagues we are going to spend the last week on it is that it has given us the opportunity to work together and to look at the various potential amendments as well as the underlying bill.

It is a huge challenge, I recognize, but one I personally look forward to working with the leadership on the other side of the aisle to accomplish as we go forward.

Mr. President, tonight we passed the Defense appropriations bill. I am very pleased with the progress today. Now we have passed three of the 13 appropriations bills for the new fiscal year that begins in just under 3 months.

In many ways, it is ironic because at the beginning of this year we had 11 appropriations bills we had to pass, and now we have passed three; so indeed we have passed 14 appropriations bills this year, which is remarkable. But, in truth, we have three appropriations bills of the 13 for the new fiscal year that we have passed. And now, well over an hour ago, that third one being passed is a benchmark in many ways. I am hopeful that over the course of the next week we will pass as many as three more appropriations bills. I am confident we will be able to pass two. I would like to be able to pass three, which would mean six appropriations bills passed before the August recess.