

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

INFLAMED RHETORIC

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I have sought recognition to comment about a statement made by the majority leader, Senator HARRY REID, yesterday that:

. . . President Bush, he is the man who is pulling the strings on the 49 puppets he has here in the Senate.

I have had my staff advise his staff that I intended to make some comments about that so he would be notified and could come to the floor if he chose to do so. His office is right adjacent to the floor. He is a minute or 2 away. I believe that is a very inappropriate statement.

I refer to rule XIX of the Senate rules, which provides:

. . . No Senator in debate shall, directly or indirectly, by any form of words impute to another Senator or to other Senators any conduct or motive unworthy or unbecoming a Senator.

It is my view that being called a puppet is in direct violation of that rule. I don't think there is much doubt about it. That is a term of derision, of ridicule, of censure, and it is an opprobrious term to make that statement.

I am especially concerned about it because in the immediate past there have been many Senators who have directly disagreed with the President—hardly puppets of President Bush or hardly puppets of anyone. Under our Constitution, the separation of powers makes the Congress separate from the executive branch and from the courts. That separation and that independence is something that Senators prize so very highly. So I don't take it lightly, and I don't think the other 48 of my colleagues take it lightly to be called puppets.

Let's look at the record. Within the past month, on November 8, 35 Republicans voted to override President Bush's veto of the Water Resources and Development Act. The veto was overridden; 35 disagreed with the President. It hardly sounds like there are 35 puppets there to vote to override the President's veto.

On April 11, 18 Republicans joined in support of the Stem Cell Enhancement Act of 2007. That is an issue that this Senator has worked on extensively since 1998, when stem cells first came upon the scene, and I was chairing the Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services. We have had some 20 hearings. Twice we enacted legislation to authorize the use of Federal funds for embryonic stem cell research. It doesn't sound like the 18 Senators who bucked the President's position are puppets.

On November 13, less than a month ago, 17 Republican Senators voted to support the SCHIP program, which the

President was on record as opposing. He didn't like the amount of money that was involved with children's health. On November 7, 10 Republican Senators voted in support of passage of the Labor, Health, Human Services and Education Appropriations bill, despite the President's promised veto. He did veto it.

So here you have 4 situations readily at hand, where 35, 18, 17, and 10 Republican Senators disagreed with the President. It doesn't sound like the Senators are puppets in that context.

Yesterday Senator REID also complained about the necessity to file cloture some 56 times. Well, each time cloture was filed, there is a complex story behind the cloture. On a good many of those occasions, cloture was filed and the so-called tree was filled, which precluded Senators from offering amendments. There was a time when Senators proudly said that any Senator could offer any amendment on any bill at any time. There might be some limitations postcloture on germaneness or on some rules, but a practice has developed in this body to foreclose that. The jargon is the "filling the tree," and when the tree is filled, nobody can offer an amendment.

Regrettably, that has been done by Republicans as well as Democrats. When it is hard to affix blame around here for the logjam, for our inability to get much done, you can usually divide it 50/50 between the parties. So to say Senator REID has had to file cloture on 56 occasions doesn't tell you very much.

Then the issue he took up yesterday in filing for cloture on the AMT, alternative minimum tax, Senator REID filed for cloture on the House bill, which stands very little chance of passing the Senate because it is fully offset with controversial revenue raisers. Now it is true that Senate Democrats offered to remove the offsets but to keep them in place for the tax extenders. The Republican position has been that it is illogical to use permanent tax increases to offset a temporary extension of current tax policy. So there is a good reason for what is being done here.

There is no doubt the AMT has to have a fix. If it is not done, there will be some 23 million Americans who will be taxed instead of the 3 million now. So we are all dedicated to that proposition. If you take a look at the RECORD on August 2 of this year, I offered an amendment to the small business tax relief bill to repeal the 1993 AMT rate increase.

On July 20, 2007, I voted in support of a Kyl amendment to the educational reconciliation bill, which fully repealed the AMT.

On March 23 of this year, I voted in support of a Lott amendment to the budget resolution that would have allowed for repeal of the 1993 AMT rate increase.

Again, on the same day, March 23, I voted in support of a Grassley amend-

ment to the budget resolution that would have allowed the full repeal of the AMT.

The same day, I voted in support of the Sessions amendment to the budget resolution that would have allowed families to deduct personal exemptions when calculating their AMT liability.

The RECORD is full of good-faith efforts to solve this problem. But as indicated, as stated, the course which the majority leader has taken is unsatisfactory to people on this side of the aisle. Whether it is satisfactory or unsatisfactory, it is not appropriate to call 49 Republican Senators puppets. We are trying to move through the business of the year—the people's business. We have 2½ weeks. Not a whole lot has been done. We were in on Monday; no votes. In yesterday; one non-controversial vote. We didn't come in until noon today.

I have been around here a substantial period of time and I wonder how we are going to get through all of the unfinished appropriations bills and the many other matters that are pending on the calendar. When the majority leader makes a proposal and asks for Republican assistance, many of us have been willing to listen to what he has to say. But he doesn't improve his case when he starts calling us puppets. I wonder if he is up to the job when he resorts to that kind of a statement, which only furthers the level of rancor and insults and animosity with that kind of an insulting comment.

I would be interested in the majority leader's reply, if he cares to make one. I will be near by the Senate floor.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

THE FARM BILL

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I come to the floor to talk about the negotiations on the farm bill and to ask my Republican colleagues to think very carefully—especially the farm State colleagues—about the circumstance we face with respect to the farm bill.

The majority leader made an offer to the Republican leader during the break that we would have a chance to move forward if they could do 10 amendments on their side and we can do 5 amendments on our side; that 2 of their 10 be unrelated to the farm bill, and that we have 2 additional amendments, and the bipartisan amendments that have been filed would not count against either allocation. That offer was made to Senator MCCONNELL, and Senator MCCONNELL has not yet answered or counteroffered.

I hope the Republican leader will indicate how we could proceed. If there is