

mind and something called the quality of life for many millions of older Americans.

I thank the President and yield the floor.

Mr. McCONNELL addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GREGG). The Senator from Kentucky.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended until the conclusion of my remarks.

I say to my friend from Michigan, who I know is concerned about the length of my statement, that it might run slightly past 4 o'clock, and I estimate not much.

Mr. LEVIN. Reserving the right to object, and I will not object. Parliamentary inquiry, Mr. President, what will be pending at the conclusion of the remarks of the Senator from Kentucky?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The gift reform bill.

Mr. LEVIN. S. 1061.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. S. 1061.

Mr. LEVIN. I thank the Chair.

ETHICS COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on July 14, the Senate Ethics Committee received a letter from the junior Senator from California which threatened that if the committee did not take a specific procedural action in an ongoing case, the Senator from California would pursue a resolution on the floor compelling the committee to take that action. In fact, the letter went so far as to stipulate a deadline for the committee's action, saying, "I plan to seek a vote on the resolution requiring public hearings unless the select committee takes such action by the end of next week."

That deadline expired last Friday, July 21. That Friday afternoon, I came to the floor and informed the Senate the committee would not meet that day, nor would it schedule a future meeting that day. I said we would not respond to any attempts to threaten the committee. I assured the Senate that everyone on the committee would like to complete work on the case now before it, but perhaps we needed a cooling-off period, and I assured the Senate that as long as the threat of the Senator from California remained, the cooling-off period would continue as well.

It is now the afternoon of Thursday, July 27. Four long legislative days have come and gone since the artificial deadline expired. It has become evident that the Senator from California has elected not to proceed with her resolution, at least at this particular time. Although we were fully prepared to provide floor time and debate the matter and have a vote, I strongly want to

commend the Senator from California for deciding not to move forward. I think it is the right decision for both the Senate and the Ethics Committee at this critical point in our inquiry.

Earlier today, Senator BYRD gave us all a moving speech on the occasion of his 14,000th vote in the Senate. He spoke about the need for more civility in the Senate and less high-profile conflict. I think this latest development indicates that we were all listening.

As I said last Friday, the committee could not in good conscience give in to an ultimatum handed to it, whether by a Senator or, frankly, for that matter, by anybody else. But now that plans for imminent floor action appear to have been suspended, I believe the Ethics Committee will be able to proceed with its work, independent of outside demands, deadlines, and divisiveness.

There has been a lot of discussion on this floor and elsewhere in the past few weeks about precedent. For example, we have heard that it would be unprecedented for the Ethics Committee not to hold a full-scale public hearing in the wake of a major investigation. This assertion is simply erroneous. In fact, the committee elected not to have a full-scale public hearing in the Durenberger case. What occurred was a staged presentation by the committee and the accused Senator only. There were no witnesses, no cross-examination, and no new testimony. In essence, it was a prescribed, prepackaged event.

In the well-known Keating case, the Ethics Committee did hold extensive public hearings but as part of its preliminary fact-gathering process, not as a final airing of collected evidence. This is a critical distinction.

In the Cranston case, in particular, Mr. President, the committee decided that the public proceeding should be held for the purpose of obtaining testimony and evidence, and it decided not to hold a public hearing once the investigation had been completed. In other words, the public phase of the Cranston case was limited to the preliminary inquiry stage, and deliberations over the evidence and penalties were conducted entirely in private.

One can argue whether the committee should have proceeded differently in those cases, but that is exactly what it chose to do. I do not recall anyone complaining about the fact that the committee did not hold full-scale public hearings in the investigative phase of those cases.

One thing, however, is clear: The assertion that it would be "unprecedented" for the Ethics Committee not to hold full-fledged public hearings in the wake of a major investigation is simply contrary to the facts.

Naturally, you can give whatever weight you like to precedent. You can ignore it, you can consider it, or you can be bound by it. A few Senators have argued that precedent ought to be controlling on the question of public hearings. But, as I have explained,

there is no clear and consistent precedent in this matter.

Nonetheless, there are other precedents that bear directly on the issue of compelling the Ethics Committee to take an action during an ongoing investigation through the mechanism of a floor resolution.

Senator BYRD, just this morning, mentioned the importance of "knowing the precedents." Of course, he was speaking about parliamentary precedents, and no one in this body knows precedents like Senator BYRD. But there are other kinds of precedents that speak clearly to the issue of whether the Ethics Committee should properly be forced by a Senate resolution to do whatever the majority voting for that resolution desires. These precedents are the ones that ought to guide our response to this question, not merely because they are precedents, but because they speak to the integrity of the ethics process in the Senate and, for that matter, the viability of the Ethics Committee itself.

The first precedent, in fact, is the establishment of the Senate Ethics Committee itself to regulate official behavior and prosecute official misconduct. I am personally proud to say that it was the distinguished Senator from Kentucky, John Sherman Cooper, who proposed the resolution that created the committee in 1964. A year earlier, right before 1964, in 1963, the Senate had been confronted with allegations of misconduct involving Bobby Baker, a close advisor to then Vice President Lyndon Johnson, and at that time secretary to the Senate majority. Back in those days, the Committee on Rules and Administration was responsible for examining charges of wrongdoing here in the Senate. And while the matter was taken seriously, the final resolution of the Baker case left the public, as well as many Members of the Senate, deeply dissatisfied. This created an opening for the Senate to reconsider how it would handle cases of official misconduct in the future. And that led to the establishment of the Ethics Committee.

In our view, for the creation of such a committee, Senator Cooper persuaded his colleagues of the need to take misconduct cases out of the regular committee structure, where the party in power obviously has a built-in advantage. Instead, he argued a select committee with equal representation from each party would inspire the confidence of both the Senate and the public. Senator Cooper said right here on this floor:

First . . . it is to give assurance that the investigation would be complete and, so far as possible, would be accepted by the Senate and by the public as being complete.

Second—

Senator Cooper said this—

and this is important to all Members and employees of the Senate—it is to provide that an investigation which could touch their rights and their offices, as well as their honor, would be conducted by a select committee which—by reason of its experience