and the wind. But until that comes along, we have to look very seriously not just at oil and our dependency upon foreign nations but almost nuclear.

I can remember back in the 1960s when people would protest nuclear plants. Now they realize there is a serious problem with the quality of our air. A lot of those people are saying: Let's go back and reexamine nuclear energy. No. 1, it is the cheapest; No. 2, it is the cleanest; and, No. 3, it is the most readily available.

I think we should address that in a comprehensive energy policy. That is what I hope will be on the floor.

We have something that is very significant. I am sure the American people, since the days of my going around the Nation with Don Hodel back in the 1980s, and since we went through a very large Persian Gulf war in 1990, now realize we can't be dependent upon the Middle East. That is the hotbed. That is where the problems are today. We are concerned about North Korea and Afghanistan and about many areas, but the Persian Gulf region is where there is a tremendous threat—yes, almost a terrorist threat.

I commend the majority leader for making the agreement to bring up a comprehensive bill. But I am asking him, since it is in his lap—he is totally responsible for keeping his word on this—that he bring something to the floor early enough so we can go through the process, debate it, and have amendments. Then we can go to conference with the House. They have already passed theirs way ahead of us. We can come up with an energy policy, which we have been trying to get through. The President, I am sure, will be happy and anxious to sign it. He already stated that he would this year before we adjourn.

It is something that we must do. It is something that is long overdue. But the opportunity is here today.

I feel very strongly that this is an opportunity we cannot bypass. I commend the majority leader and am anxious to see what that product looks like. I hope we are able to work on that product and get it to conference so we get an energy policy and get it signed.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

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

RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate stand in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:07 p.m. recessed until 2:04 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. BAYH).

CHARGING OF TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. REID. Will the Senator yield for a unanimous consent request?

Mr. CLELAND. I yield.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I think it is clear for the record, but we wanted to make sure that the last approximately hour and a half is charged against the postcloture proceedings on the bill before the Senate. I am quite sure that is the case, but I wanted to make it clear.

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

AVIATION SECURITY ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. CLELAND. Mr. President, almost exactly 1 month ago to the day this Nation was rocked by the most horrific act of terrorism ever leveled against the United States. Following the events of September 11, we resolved as a nation to work together to secure our borders and do all in our power to prevent a repeat of the kind of assault that shook this country 30 days ago. Key to the security of America is our ability to quickly put in place enhanced security measures at our airports and on our planes to ensure that our skies are safe and that Americans are no longer afraid to fly. Yet the legislation that is key to ensuring that America's aviation system is secure—the very measure that is our most direct legislative response to the hijacking of four U.S. airliners—has been stalled now for a week. This body is in agreement on many issues in this bill and we have compromised on others. It is time that we bring this critically important bill to the floor and openly debate the differences which remain.

Whether or not to ''federalize'' airport security personnel is an issue that still deeply divides this body. I also attended the briefing by El Al officials which the distinguished Chairman of the Commerce Committee and others have referred to throughout this debate. We are all aware of the extraordinary security measures the Israeli airline has put in place and the extraordinary success of those measures. Because of the constant threat of terrorism to Israel and the Israeli people, El Al has taken the following steps to ensure the safety of its passengers and the integrity of its operations: armed, plain-clothes, in-flight guards; extensive passenger questioning and Interpol background checks; extensive luggage inspections, both visual inspection by employees and high-tech explosive detection, including the placing of luggage and cargo in decompression chambers; and secure cockpit doors that remain locked from the inside. Since the implementation of these measures, no Israeli airline has ever been hijacked. This record speaks for itself.

In that briefing the El Al officials were asked if airport security personnel were government workers or contract workers. The response was telling. The El Al officials did not even know what contract workers are. They want government workers on the front line to enforce the tightest security measures possible. As others have pointed out, we want Secret Service, government employees to provide the greatest protection possible to the President of the United States. We want Federal law enforcement officers to protect the elected members of the House and Senate. Why would we want any less for the people of this Nation?

There was a recent article in the Atlanta Constitution about an Atlanta-based security company which provides baggage screening for 17 of the 20 largest airports in the country, including baggage screening for Dulles and Newark airports—where two of the four hijacked planes originated on September 11. According to the Atlanta Constitution:

The company has 19,000 employees and provides security for office buildings, colleges and Federal facilities. In the past year, it pled guilty to allowing untrained employees—including some with criminal backgrounds—to operate checkpoints in Philadelphia International Airport. Its parent company was fined $1.2 million. In addition, the company is also said to have falsified test scores for at least 2 dozen applicants and hired at least 14 security screeners with criminal backgrounds ranging from aggravated assault and burglary to drug and firearm possession. The highest advertised job at this company pays $7 to $8.50 an hour.

Mr. President, to repeat, these workers are paid $7 to $8 an hour. With minimum wage pay like this, no wonder many of these screeners look at going to work at a fast-food restaurant as a promotion. Clearly we cannot have this attitude as our first line of defense.

In the El Al briefing, there was a slide describing the onion-like layers of security in their aviation system. At the outer layer was the layer of intelligence—key to any effective protection of our skies and borders. In Israel, when there is knowledge of a possible security threat, there is immediately a line of intelligence communication from the highest levels of government down, and in that intelligence loop are the security officers at Ben Gurion Airport. This is a compelling reason why we should have Federal workers at the airport checkpoints in this country. There are over 700 of these checkpoints at over 420 airports. We need a domestic version of the Customs Service as our first line of defense against hijackers.

The General Accounting Office in assessing our aviation vulnerabilities stated that ''the human element is the weakest link in the chain.'' We saw that on September 11. The airline industry is in favor of federalizing airport security personnel. More importantly, the American people support it.