The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 6, 1999, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. BERRY. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I missed rollcall votes number 147 and 148 on Monday, May 24, 1999, because I was attending a funeral of a dear friend.

Had I been present, I would have voted “yea” on both of these votes.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1905, LEGISLATIVE BRANCH APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000

Mr. DREIER (for special order of Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged resolution (Rept. No. 106–165) on the resolution (H. Res. 190) providing for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 1905) making appropriations for the Legislative Branch for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

DAIRY PRICING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. GREEN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I am here tonight to talk about an important issue of fairness, fairness to farmers, fairness to consumers, and fairness to taxpayers. I know that “fairness” is an overused term. But quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, it has never been more important or more true than it is on the issue that I want to talk about tonight, and that is the issue of dairy pricing.

For the last six decades, we have had a Government mandated system of dairy price supports. It began in the late 1930s because dairy producers had a difficult time getting their goods to consumers in a timely way. They had a difficult time because of technology in meeting consumption needs. We did not, quite frankly, have effective infrastructure or enough technology to transport our surplus to States that had deficit in production.

Those days are over, however. We have the refrigeration, we have the infrastructure to transport dairy products from States like Wisconsin anywhere in America overnight. As a result, the outdated dairy price system, the Federal order system, no longer makes sense.

Wisconsin dairy farmers and Wisconsin communities are being ravaged, they are being destroyed by the current Federal order system. In the last 8 years, Wisconsin has lost over 10,000 dairy farms. Wisconsin has lost 2,000 dairy farms in each of the last 2 years. We have lost more dairy farms in the last 8 years than most States ever have.

Now, I am here tonight to speak to my colleagues, quite frankly, not on behalf of dairy farmers. Dairy farmers are not looking for our sympathy. They are a tough bunch. This is a tough life-style. They know that. They have been fighting uphill all of their lives. They are not looking for sympathy. They are looking for fairness.

More importantly, quite frankly, I would think to the Members of this body is the fact that this unfair system not only hurts our dairy farmers, my family farmers in Wisconsin, of which there are 22,000 remaining, but it is also unfair to consumers.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to realize, it is important to know that the outdated Federal order system artificially inflates the price of milk. And as more farmers go out of business, and as I just said, we are losing farmers each and every year, the more farmers who go out of business, the higher that price will be.

The Citizens Against Government Waste, Americans for Tax Reform, a number of taxpayer groups, groups that do not necessarily have a natural stake in the fight over a dairy policy, they have reached an interesting conclusion. After looking at the Federal order system, they have concluded that the Federal order system that we have had in this country for six decades is little more than a tax on milk. It is a milk tax that consumers are paying all across this land. It is a milk tax to the tune of about $1 billion each and every year.

Now, the reason I come forward today is because of a battle that I believe is going to be on this floor tomorrow and, quite frankly and unfortunately, probably on this floor for weeks and months to come.

Some weeks ago, Secretary Dan Glickman proposed a final order on the Federal order system for dairies. And in that Federal order, Secretary Glickman proposed a very minor change to the Federal order system, a very minor, modest change. And it is true, it will benefit Wisconsin farmers, dairy farmers, but again in a very modest way.

Now, it may be ironic to some of you that I come here today to support a proposal from a Democrat administration. But I come forward because this
issue of the Federal order system of the milk tax is not about Republican versus Democrat, it is not about conservartive versus liberal. It is about doing the right thing. And I come here tonight to argue that we need to support Secretary Glickman’s plan. Modest as it is, it is a step in the right direction.

Now, the Federal order system for dairy is one of the most complicated systems that you can possibly imagine. It is full of acronyms, it is full of terminology that the average person cannot understand, let alone a Member of Congress who may serve on the Committee on Agriculture or who comes from a dairy State. If you tried to explain to your constituents that this system that we have in place creates a price on milk based not upon productivity, merely on how far away it is from the dairy farmer, not upon efficiency, but instead based merely on the distance that a producer is from the city of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, your constituents would not believe you. They would think that you were making it up. The sad reality is that is the truth.

We have a dairy system in this Nation for which government mandates prices for fluid milk again based merely upon geography. That is wrong. It is unfair to farmers, it is unfair to consumers, it inflates the price of milk and, quite frankly, it is un-American because it is contrary to our free enterprise system.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT). I know that he shares many of the concerns that I bring forward tonight.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. I would like to thank the gentleman for yielding and especially thank him for requesting time to be heard on this important order tonight. I suspect there are an awful lot of Americans who may tune us in and certainly most of our colleagues who will be watching in their offices or are still here on the House floor who really do not understand this whole milk marketing order system. Frankly, having studied it now for about 5 years, I honestly cannot say that I completely understand it, either.

But I would correct the gentleman on one fact, and that is, he said it is priced equal to the dairy farmer from Eau Claire, Wisconsin. That is partially right. It is the only commodity I think in the United States, maybe in the world, that is priced not only based on where it comes from, it is also priced on what it will go into. Milk that goes into cheese is of lower value than milk that goes into a bottling plant and is sold for fluid milk for drinking.

There are actually four classes of milk. Class one is milk that goes into powdered milk. So we have four classes, and it is all priced based upon where it comes from. And the farther you are from Eau Claire, Wisconsin, the more the dairy farmer gets for their milk. The closer you are to Eau Claire, Wisconsin, the less you get.

And then if you are at an area that has cheese plants and most of the milk goes into cheese, you get a lower price still.

In my opinion, it is the most indefensible thing that the Federal Government ever created. It may have made sense back in 1934. In my opinion, it makes no economic sense today.

Let me just show in this chart that I have next to me, and it sort of illustrates the differentials we are talking about. These are the producer class one blended price benefits per hundredweight that the way milk is priced. Milk to dairy farmers, and we have got a former dairy farmer sitting here in the second row and maybe he can talk a little bit about it, maybe he does not even understand how his cream checks were calculated.

But if you lived, for example, in the northeastern part of the United States, your differential came to about $1.40. If you lived in the Appalachian region, that average price was $2.34. If you lived down in Florida, that worked out to $3.32. But if you live in the area that the gentleman from Wisconsin and myself come from, in the upper Midwest, you can see that over here it is only 27 cents. That is what we are talking about, ultimately.

We are not asking for special privilege, for special benefits; we are not even asking to receive equal pay for equal milk; but we would like to equalize it much more than it is today.

The net practical effect of the Glickman plan is, in my opinion, it illustrates it more geographically and what we are talking about. The country is divided up into all of these milk marketing order regions. For example, these are the average blended prices for current Federal milk marketing order regions. In the Pacific Northwest, that average price last month I believe was $14.75. If you are in the upper Midwest, that is, basically Wisconsin, Minnesota, parts of the Dakotas, you are talking $13.57.

Now, on the other hand, if you lived in eastern Colorado and produced milk, your average blended price last month was $15.16. And if you lived down here in Florida, that price is $16.82. If you look at this, at one time it may have made some sense because the area around Eau Claire, Wisconsin, was considered the dairy capital of the United States and in many respects the dairy capital of the world, and we are still privileged that in this region we produce almost 19 percent of the milk in the United States.

But as I say, it may have made some sense back in 1934; that was before the days of refrigeration, that was before the days of the kind of transportation, the interstate highway system that we have, but today we can move milk 1,200 miles in 24 hours, we can move the milk further and further, and it makes no sense back in 1934. In my opinion, it makes no economic sense today.

I want to point out these colors if I could. I promise not to take too much time here, but this essentially reflects some of the changes that would occur under the plan that Secretary Glickman came out with. If you look at this, actually Minnesota and Wisconsin lose under the Glickman proposal.

And so we are not asking for completely equal pay for equal milk, but we are asking to level the playing field. The net practical effect of the Glickman plan is, it does eliminate some of the differences. Relative to some of the other areas of the State, if you just go by winners and losers, we lose less than some of the other States, but that is because they already are getting more than we are getting.

So we are prepared to accept what Secretary Glickman has proposed in a spirit of compromise, because at least
in general it moves to a leveling of the way that the milk marketing orders are set up.

Before I yield back to my colleague from Wisconsin, I want to play a little visualization game with some of my colleagues. If you could, just close your eyes and think of all of the products that the pricing is based upon some geography. Just think about that. Well, the answer is, there is only one. Only milk.

I think we have got a cartoon from, I believe it is from the St. Paul Pioneer Press. Maybe the gentleman from Wisconsin wants to talk a little bit about it. Maybe it is easier for me to talk about it because I have got it right here.

But could we imagine a system where all computers would be price adjusted according to certain geographical locations? Could we imagine a system where all music is based on a certain geographical location? It is amazing when you stop to think about it. It is the only product where the price is based on some arbitrary geographical location.

Secondly, it is based on what that product is going to go into. In fact, up in northern Minnesota where we produce an awful lot of iron ore, they produce taconite pellets. These taconite pellets, no one could imagine that some Federal bureaucrat would sit up in Washington, D.C., and say, these iron mine pellets are going to go into automobiles so they will be priced at this level, and these taconite pellets are going to go into steel lockers and therefore the price will be something else. That would be a crazy, absurd idea. But the truth of the matter is that exactly what happens to milk. It is all done by bureaucrats here in Washington, D.C.

Once again, we are here on the floor of the House tonight arguing this case because farmers in the upper Midwest are set up. We have been dealing with this antiquated, in fact Justice Anton Scalia has referred to this system as "Byzantine."

We have dealt with this Byzantine system for 60 years. Finally, Secretary Glickman has come out with a plan which is not perfect, actually in some respects it still punishes dairy farmers in the upper Midwest, but at least it levels the playing field, at least it is fairer for dairy farmers regardless of where they are than the system we have today. I congratulate him for it.

I am willing, in a spirit of bipartisanship, to move forward with the plan that the Secretary came up with.

I will yield back to the gentleman from Wisconsin and maybe we can talk a little more about this cartoon. As I say, it would be a whole lot funnier if it was not true.

Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin. I thank my friend and colleague from Minnesota. I think he has pointed out again just the absurdity of the system and that cartoon does show it.

Think about this. We are entering the year 2000, the next millennium, yet we have a system for the production and consumption and distribution of milk that is based upon economic realities around World War II. Think about how much technology has changed since then.

Beyond that, we are at a time in our history in which Members of this body from both sides of the aisle are emphasizing the need to open up borders, to break down barriers for trade all across this world. Yet here in America, in supposedly the bastion of entrepreneurial capitalism, we have a system that creates barriers, that blocks the flow, creates disincentives for the flow of dairy products to when the time is ripe and across state lines and across regional lines. This is counter to everything that we stand for in America today.

Again, I want to come back and emphasize, this system is terrible for the dairy farmers in States like Minnesota and Wisconsin. Again, over the last 8 years, we have lost more dairy farmers than most States ever had.

But beyond that, this is bad for consumers. Under this system, we are driving up the price of milk. We are also encouraging large corporate farms, which are buying up the small family farmer.

If that trend continues, we are going to see dairy production in the hands of only a few, and then we will have a true monopoly on the supply of milk. Then we will see milk prices rise, and then milk will no longer be the cheap and wonderful fluid that it is, available to all today.

This is also, this system is bad for taxpayers. It drives up the cost on programs like the school meal program, it drives up the costs for families on food stamps, reduces the value of food stamps. This system, almost any way you look at it, is absurd, it is un-American, and it is wrong.

Now we are not going to change things overnight, we are not going to change things here tonight, but we do want to make our case to the American people. It is a long uphill battle, but it is certainly no longer and no more uphill than our dairy farmers are facing. We will work the process tonight, and as has been stated before, it is a long battle that we have ahead.

I yield my friend from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT).

Mr. GUTKNECHT. I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin for yielding, and again I thank him for having this spirited debate.

As my colleagues know, if this regional differentiation was not bad enough, and if the fact that we price milk to the producer based on not only how far they are from Eau Claire, Wisconsin, but what ultimately that milk is going to go into, if that were not bad enough, we have one other little wrinkle that has made things worse. It is called regional compacts.

Now this is the only area, again, that I can think of where we have allowed States literally to go together and hold out imports of dairy products from other parts of the country. In other words, they have created their own little fiefdoms.

Right now there is a Northeast Dairy Compact, and unfortunately some of our colleagues, even as we speak, are trying to work out new compacts to try and create even worse regional differentiations between the regions and to keep out imports from other parts of the country.

As my colleagues know, this seems, and the gentleman mentioned the word “un-American”. At the very time that we are trying to break down trade barriers to China and to Asia, we are constraining trade barriers here in the United States, and in my opinion it is just an outrage, and so the only thing we can do is come to the House floor, offer amendments, talk about this, talk about the fairness, and hopefully in the long light of history sooner or later these trade barriers are going to be knocked down. We are going to see open trade not only with Europe, but with the Northeast as well.

The problem with compacts in my opinion is they do violate, if not the letter, certainly the spirit of the Commerce Clause in the Constitution, and frankly, had they not been legislatively approved, there is a very good chance that the Supreme Court would have thrown them out. That debate is going to get very heated because, as I say, not only does the Northeast want to expand its dairy compact, they are talking about a regional compact in the Southeast, perhaps extending as far west as into Kansas.

As we joked with some of the supporters of those compacts. We would be happy to allow those compacts, if they would just allow the upper Midwest in. I mean, if we could be getting the same
Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, talking about what this really ultimately costs to consumers as well, the estimate that we have of the cost of the compact to New England consumers has been $47 million.

Now some people will say that milk is not a price-sensitive item and that, as my colleagues know, people, consumers will continue to drink about the same amount of milk regardless of the price. I am not sure I really believe that, and in fact I have had some of my friends at the Dairy Association try to tell me that. It seems to me that if you over-price milk in certain regions of the country, the net practical effect is the same as the differential system that is the practical effect, of course, is that we concentrate upon milk consumption, and what we desperately, and one of the real problems with what I call the Balkanization, and we are having this war going on in the Balkans right now where that term came from, but I point out what we have is Balkanization of the United States as it relates to milk.

The real tragedy is the biggest war that is going on right now for the milk industry is this competition with the soft drink industry, and the soft drink industry is out there, and they are marketing and they are competing, and they are vicious on price and they are vicious on advertising, and they are constantly taking a bigger and bigger share of the beverage market, if my colleagues will, and at the very time, it seems to me, that the milk industry ought to be speaking with one voice and ought to be working together and figuring out how they can get a bigger market share relative to the soft drink industry, and the family farm that we should be working together. Unfortunately, we have all of these regions working against each other, and the net practical effect, of course, is that we continue to lose market share relative to CocaCola, Pepsi Cola, Mountain Dew and all of those other soft drinks that are out there competing particularly for the younger people's market.

And so there are so many things that need to be said positively about the milk industry, the dairy industry, and unfortunately we spend so much of our time here in Washington fighting with each other over this regionalization of the way pricing is structured. It is a terrible mistake, and it has cost the consumer.

Let me also add that, as my colleagues know, a lot of the argument for this system and even for the regional compacts has been that it will save small dairy farmers. Well, over the last 10 years we have lost something like 10,000 dairy farmers. As my colleagues know, if that is the definition of success, we cannot afford much more of that.

What we really ultimately need to do is work together to find fairness, to find common ground, to work together and make sure our dairy products and, and we are not just talking about fluid milk either. I think there is a tremendous market worldwide for cheese products and other dairy products which we can produce so well, so efficiently with great quality here in the United States. But unfortunately, as I say, we spend too much of our time from a national perspective not looking for additional markets for our dairy farmers both here in the United States and around the world, but fighting amongst ourselves over this antiquated, Byzantine, unfair milk marketing order system.

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lost 50 percent of all dairy farms lost in the Nation over the last decade were lost in the upper Midwest in States like the gentleman's and mine.

So, people may be thinking that they are helping out dairy farmers with these higher prices. The sad reality is they are not. They are not. If anything, they are accelerating the decline of the family farm, and that is a great tragedy.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, if you look at this purple section here, we are losing an average of three dairy farm families every single day, and as my colleagues know, as I said earlier, if the definition, if this program was designed to protect the small dairy farm, I mean by its very definition it has been an abysmal failure. We cannot afford to continue this policy much longer.

And the gentleman is also exactly right that ultimately, unfortunately, unless we have some real reform of this system and at least have some fairness, and we cannot guarantee that some of these smaller dairy farmers are not going to go out of business. And I will be honest, some of them go out of business just because of quality of life.

I mean there is nobody who works harder than that dairy farmer who gets up every morning at 5 o'clock to milk 60 cows and then has to repeat the process that afternoon. I mean it is one of the hardest lives that anybody can take on, but it should not be made unfair by a Federal milk marketing order system which penalizes someone just because they happen to be from the upper Midwest.

Now in this great debate, and my colleague is going to learn the longer he is here in this business and in this city, when he leaves, and I do not even particularly like the term leveling the playing field. Actually I just like to talk about fairness. All we want is fairness. But many people will use the term “leveling the playing field.” The truth of the matter is, in any debate about leveling the playing field there is at least half of the people in that debate who do not want to level the playing field because they have an advantage, and they want to keep the status quo.

But even in some of those areas where they currently have a huge advantage, like the Southeast and down in Florida, even into Texas and over into New Mexico, the further away you get from Eau Claire, Wisconsin, I think even those people have to acknowledge that at the end of the day milk ought to be treated like almost everything else, and it ought to be priced more or less based on what the market will yield.

Now I am fully in favor of putting some kind of a minimum price under the floor of milk. In fact, I have introduced a bill this year to put a floor of at least 10.35.

I think there is a need to create some kind of a job absorber in case there are market aberrations which would drive the price of milk below the floor at the other end of the spectrum, part of the thing that happens with this also is in some respects, it keeps milk from going up. If one cannot expand markets, if one limits oneself in their ability to get market with cheese and other dairy exports, ultimately one limits their ability to increase net farm income, and particularly farm income as it relates to dairy producers.

So this is a bad system, a bad system for dairy producers. It is bad because it causes conflict among the regions when we ought to be working together. It is a bad system because it ultimately costs consumers in some areas more than they should have to pay for the milk that they buy, and it really has done almost nothing to protect the small dairy farmer.

So from every perspective I think this has been an abysmal failure. The time has come, even though, as I said earlier, the plan that Secretary Glickman came up with is certainly not perfect; and frankly, on a net basis, we still lose under this plan, but we lose less than we are losing today.

So those of us in the upper Midwest, from Wisconsin, Minnesota, parts of the Dakotas, we are prepared to accept the Secretary’s plan. We think it should be allowed to go into effect, and frankly, we think we should do what the Congress said 2 years ago and then again repeated last year, and that is to allow the compacts to expire.

They were designed originally only as an experiment which would last a year, and part of that experiment was to find out if they could curb the number of small dairy farms that were going out of business. The evidence is in, the evidence is clear; they have not done that. They have cost consumers more money. They have increased the number of corporate farms on every front; in my opinion, the compacts have been an abysmal failure.

We should allow them to do what the agreement originally was, which is just keep all ends of the bargain, move ahead with the dairy reform that Secretary Glickman has come out with, and end these crazy compacts and do not expand them to other States.

Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. The gentleman has been fighting this fight a lot longer than I have, and I applaud his efforts.

I guess, just to wrap up and summarize, as the gentleman has pointed out, Secretary Glickman’s order is not perfect; and frankly, if we could do it just in Minnesota and Wisconsin, we would argue it is far from it, and it is a very small, modest step. But at least it is a step in the right direction.

It recognizes that the long-standing system, standing since 1937, of Federal orders and compacts is bad for farmers, driving our family farms out of business; it is bad for consumers because it inflates the costs of milk, it adds a milk tax in so many ways; and finally, it is counter to free enterprise, free enterprise not just in the manufacturing sector, not just in the service sector, but even in the agricultural sector. It is the only agricultural product treated like this.

So it is bad on all counts. It is time to make a larger change, but at least to support Secretary Glickman’s proposal, let that come on line, make a small but positive step and offer some hope to our farmers.

PROGRAMS THAT WORK FOR EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, this evening I want to spend some time with my colleagues talking about an issue that is important not only to me and my colleagues on the minority side, but I think to all Members of this Congress and certainly to the people of America.

The topic is education, an issue that we talk an awful lot about, but I want to talk this evening and share with my colleagues some examples of not only programs that work, but also people that are doing outstanding things for our children, certainly in my district and in my State.

I want to talk a little bit about an innovative program that I visited a couple of weeks ago in Greensboro. It is a program called Reading Together. One of the things that I learned before I came to Congress, and I think we have all known it for a long time, but certainly it was pointed out to me very vividly while I was superintendent of schools, if one can teach a child to read by the time they are in the third grade, one has accomplished a great deal as to what we need to do to help a child learn and do well, and certainly it was pointed out to me very vividly while I was superintendent of schools, if one can teach a child to read by the time they are in the third grade, one has accomplished a great deal as to what we need to do to help a child learn and do well, and certainly it was pointed out to me very vividly while I was superintendent of schools, if one can teach a child to read by the time they are in the third grade, one has accomplished a great deal as to what we need to do to help a child learn and do well, and certainly it was pointed out to me very vividly while I was superintendent of schools, if one can teach a child to read by the time they are in the third grade, one has accomplished a great deal as to what we need to do to help a child learn and do well, and certainly it was pointed out to me very vividly while I was superintendent of schools, if one can teach a child to read by the time they are in the third grade, one has accomplished a great deal as to what we need to do to help a child learn and do well.