

The PRESIDING OFFICER. It would take unanimous consent.

Mr. DODD. Senator STEVENS and I both have a short time we want to take after our distinguished colleague has a chance to speak.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the morning hour be extended until 11:15, with the time equally divided.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

THE PROGRESS OF THE SENATE

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I want to speak about energy, which seems to be one of the things I think is very important that people are talking about. But first I wish to comment a little on the progress, or lack thereof, that we are making in the Senate. It is not unusual that we come up to the end of the session and find ourselves kind of blocked up here, and things have been postponed until now. Of course, it is the appropriations bills that always end up in this category. We have 13 of them to pass in order to keep the Government going. The fiscal year expired at the end of September, of course. We have extended our time and will do it into next week again.

One of the important roles of Congress is this allocation of funding. It is one that is very important and really needs to be given all the attention we can give it. I think we ought to move as quickly as we can to do that job. I hope we don't end up with huge omnibus bills at the end of the session. They are so large that people don't know what is in them. I would rather we deal with them individually as much as possible. Let me say that one of the things we ought to consider, which I have supported since I have been in the Congress—and from my experience in the Wyoming Legislature—is I think we ought to have a 2-year budgeting arrangement, which would alleviate this sort of thing every year. Nevertheless, we are not there.

However, we need to move forward. When we are ready with the appropriations bills, we ought to do that. I favor the bill being talked about here. I think it is a good bill. I don't know why it wasn't brought up earlier in the week when we were sitting here and didn't have anything before us. Now we are down to the last hours of this week and we bring up something that stops the opportunity for us to pass legislation regarding appropriations. I think that is unfortunate. In any event, we ought to be doing that.

Obviously, one of the difficulties with appropriations has been this idea of at-

taching to them the kinds of things that are not within the appropriations process because it is the end of the session, and because they have not been handled, or some refused to handle them earlier. That was wrong, in my opinion. I hope we consider a rule that would make that more difficult.

ENERGY POLICY

Regarding energy, we ought to talk about that. We ought to talk, more importantly, about where we want to be, and what we think the role of the domestic energy program ought to be to achieve what we consider to be our goal. I have become more and more aware of the importance of that sort of thing in all the legislation that we address. Really, it became clear to me when we were talking about re-regulation of electricity. We got wrapped up in all the different kinds of details that necessarily go into it, but really I don't think we had a clear vision of where we wanted to be when we were through. We didn't have a clear vision of our goal.

To a large extent, I think that is the case with energy. We have high prices, for gasoline, for natural gas, and we are going to have higher electricity and heating oil prices, and so on. Of course, that is the problem we see, but what do we see as the solution? I think certainly these high prices ought not to be a big surprise. This administration hasn't had an energy policy. We were very happy when oil was \$10 a barrel. When it gets up to \$35 a barrel, we are very unhappy, and I understand that. I don't recommend that, either.

We ought to have intermediate pricing. You don't do that without an energy policy. We have lacked a domestic energy policy that keeps us from being entirely dependent and subservient to OPEC and the foreign oil producers. We have allowed ourselves to do that.

It is not new that we don't have one. The Clinton administration has relied on short-term fixes. The most current one was to release crude oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, which was 30 million barrels, and I don't suppose that will change the world. That is a short-term kind of reaction, not a long-term solution to where we are going. That has been the latest short-term fix.

I agree with increasing funding for Low-Income Housing Energy Assistance, and other short-term fixes. Those are good, and they have to be done because of where we are. But the fact is, if we are going to get out of that over time, then we have to do something different. We have to take a look at EPA's regulations that have had the effect of shutting down coal-fired powerplants in the Midwest. We have more coal resources probably than most anything. We can do more about the difficulties that have happened in the past. We have done a great deal because coal is now a clean source, but

this administration has made it more and more difficult for that to happen. The fact that coal supplies 56 percent of the Nation's electric energy is very important, of course.

I have a personal feeling about it because our State is the highest producer of low sulfur coal. We have had 36 refineries shut down since 1992. No new ones have been built since 1996, largely because the EPA pressed for continuing restrictions that make it much more difficult. This administration—particularly the Vice President—calls for green alternatives. I don't know of anybody who opposes that idea. Green alternatives, right now, provide about 2 percent of our energy needs. It is going to be a very long time before solar or wind energy moves in to do that. So that can't be our short-term/long-term policy.

There are a lot of things that can be done and we are moving to try to do that. It has to do with domestic energy policy which would help increase domestic production so that we are not totally subject to the whims of OPEC. Since 1992, our oil production in this country has gone down 17 percent. Consumption has gone up 14 percent. Part of that is in States such as Wyoming in the West, where 50 percent of the State is owned by the Federal Government. Those areas of Federal land—not all—are for multiple use.

We found this administration making it much more difficult for exploration and production to take place for the multiple use of public lands. That is not a good idea. U.S. jobs were involved in the exploring and producing. We used to have 400,000 of those jobs. Now it is less than 300,000, which is a 27-percent decline. These imports are rapidly growing—up 56 percent now—and we need to move forward with that.

This is really an issue we can do something about. We need to do something about it. I could go over a lot of things this administration has brought about that have helped to create the energy crisis we are in now. I am urging that we look at some of the things that are available to us and that we can do to reach the goal we want in order to be more self-reliant for our energy. We can do something about consumption, too, and I have no problem about that. However, that is not a short-term problem. A short-term problem is going to be the price to farmers, ranchers, truckers, and to people who use oil particularly for heating in the wintertime.

Certainly we are not going to be able to solve this problem in the next few days. I hope we can move forward with our appropriations process, which is obviously before us now. I do think we ought to be giving a great deal of thought to establishing a domestic energy policy that will, in fact, help level out our dependency on foreign oil and be good for this economy and good for American citizens.