SENATE—*Wednesday, March 22, 2000*

The Senate met at 9:45 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Gracious Father, in this quiet moment, we seek the ultimate joy of life. We come to abide simply in Your presence. We would not interrupt what You have to say to us with our chatter. We need You more than anything that You can provide for us. Make us as ready to listen as we are to talk. You have created us for communion with You. We thank You for speaking to us in our souls. Now we hear what You have to say to us: We are loved, forgiven, and cherished by You. You have plans for us: A personal will for each of us and a will for our Nation. Bless the Senators now as they wait on You. Inspire us to follow their leadership as far as they follow You. We open our minds and hearts to receive You, our Lord, our Saviour, Peace, and Power. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable LINCOLN CHAFEE, a Senator from the State of Rhode Island, led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. L. CHAFEE). The Senator from Delaware.

SCHEDULE

Mr. ROTH. Mr. President, today the Senate will immediately begin the final 15 minutes of debate on H.R. 5, the Social Security earnings bill. By previous consent, the Senate will proceed to a vote on final passage of the bill at approximately 10 a.m. Following the vote, the Senate will begin a period of morning business of 2 hours with the time controlled by Senators BYRD, MURKOWSKI, and DURBIN. For the remainder of the time, the Senate is expected to begin debate on the crop insurance legislation. However, negotiations regarding amendments and debate time are ongoing, and if no agreement can be made, the Senate may turn to any Legislative or Executive Calendar items available for action.

I thank my colleagues for their attention.

MEASURES PLACED ON CALENDAR—S. 2262 AND S. 2263

Mr. ROTH. Mr. President, I understand there are two bills at the desk due for their second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bills by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2262) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to institute a Federal fuels tax holiday.

A bill (S. 2263) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to institute a Federal fuels tax holiday.

Mr. ROTH. Mr. President, on behalf of the majority leader, I object to further proceedings on these bills at this time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the rule, the bills will be placed on the calendar.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

Mr. ROTH. Mr. President, what is the order of business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

SENIOR CITIZENS' FREEDOM TO WORK ACT OF 2000

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of H.R. 5, which the clerk will report by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5) to amend title II of the Social Security Act to eliminate the earnings test on individuals who have attained retirement age.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 15 minutes of debate equally divided for closing remarks.

The Senator from New York is recognized.

Mr. MOYNIHAN. Mr. President, it has been agreed that I will begin these brief remarks in order that our chairman might conclude the debate and proceed to the vote which I think has every prospect of being prodigious in its majority.

We have heard the compelling arguments to eliminate the so-called earnings penalty for persons 65 years and older. There is a short-term cost that is followed by a long-term payback, if you like, such that in a 20- to 30-year period the Social Security trust funds will not in any way be affected. The present practice is to decrease benefits to persons who continue working after their technical retirement age is reached, and then to compensate them after they reach age 70 or stop working. It is a complicated calculation. It is a cause of much distress, if you like, within the Social Security Administration—about $100 million a year just in sorting out the claims. It is not understood. There is the elemental fact that, although at 65 if you continue to work you know you will get back your benefits, that is in actuarial terms. For the cohort of several million persons, it will all be evened out. You may not be. So why not get rid of this archaic complexity? It is a remnant of Depression legislation of the 1930s.

In that regard, however, we do have the question attending the long-term deficit of the Social Security system. Yesterday our friend from Arizona, Senator MCCAIN, spoke eloquently about that matter, having raised it during his primary campaign on his side of the aisle. Senator KERREY spoke with equal eloquence. Senator MCCAIN was kind enough to note legislation that Senator KERREY and I have introduced in this matter.

In very short order, I would simply like to recapitulate the four simple steps which put Social Security on an actuarially sound basis for the next 75 years. They are:

No. 1, provide for an accurate cost-of-living adjustment. In 1996, the Boskin Commission originally estimated that the CPI overstates changes in the cost-of-living by 1.1 percentage points; now they say it is 0.8 of a percentage point.

No. 2, normal taxation of benefits.

No. 3, extend coverage to all newly hired State and local workers.

I might interject, if ever there was a holdover from the 1930s, it was this. It was not clear at that time whether the Federal Government could tax a State entity, so they were left untaxed. A great many workers in civil service positions pay no taxes on their principal jobs, but qualify for benefits from ''side'' jobs, and it is just not fair. We are not taking away anything, but just covering newly hired workers like everyone else.

No. 4, increase the length of the computation period from 35 to 38 years.

We now have a 75-year, long-term actuarial deficit of 2.07 percent. This would bring that down by 2.05 percent, leaving an inconsequential .02 percent over the 75-year period.

These are data based on actuarial calculations and they are clearly within our capacity. Let us hope one day we do it before it becomes too late. That time will come sooner than you may think.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the table be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.