

No one will be allowed on the floor of the House who does not have the privilege of the floor of the House.

Due to the large attendance that is anticipated, the Chair feels that the rule regarding the privilege of the floor must be strictly adhered to.

Children of Members will not be permitted on the floor and the cooperation of all Members is requested.

The practice of reserving seats prior to the joint session by placard will not be allowed. Members may reserve their seats by physical presence only following the security sweep of the Chamber.

□ 1530

#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess for approximately 5 minutes.

Accordingly (at 3 o'clock and 35 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess for approximately 5 minutes.

□ 1554

#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE) at 3 o'clock and 54 minutes p.m.

#### PRIVILEGES OF THE HOUSE—RETURNING TO SENATE H.R. 2500, DEPARTMENTS OF COMMERCE, JUSTICE, AND STATE, THE JUDICIARY, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2002

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to a question of the privileges of the House, and I offer a privileged resolution (H. Res. 240) and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

#### H. RES. 240

*Resolved*, That the amendment of the Senate to the bill H.R. 2500 entitled the "Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2002", in the opinion of this House, contravenes the first clause of the seventh section of the first article of the Constitution of the United States and is an infringement of the privileges of this House and that such bill be respectfully returned to the Senate with a message communicating this resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The resolution raises a question of the privileges of the House.

The gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) each will be recognized for 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS).

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

As was indicated by the content of the resolution, the resolution is nec-

essary to return to the Senate, unfortunately, the Commerce-State-Justice appropriations bill because there is a provision, section 404 of the Senate amendments, that is an import ban. This, therefore, is a revenue measure and contravenes the Constitution, article 1, section 7, clause 1.

Notwithstanding the meritorious nature of the amendment, the idea of trying to deal with importation bans on diamonds from certain African countries that are used to finance rebel causes, the underlying constitutional question of the Constitution's statement that all bills for raising revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives transcends any particular issue, no matter the merits of a particular issue. Therefore, I am asking the House that it insist on its constitutional prerogative as the sole originator of revenue measures, notwithstanding the meritorious aspects of any particular desired piece of legislation.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, I would indicate that this is not necessarily, unfortunately, a novel or new conflict between the House and the Senate. As recently as July 14, and then again on August 12, 1994, on the Treasury-Postal, appropriation bill and then on the Agriculture appropriation bill, just such a blue slip was requested and granted. This is another indication of the difficulty of wanting to move legislation but understanding that there is a process constitutionally required.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means that this is an important piece of legislation, but there are constitutional prerogatives that provide that the Committee on Ways and Means originate this type of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, in view of the merits of the legislation, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. HALL), one of the original sponsors in the House of the legislation such as myself and other Members.

Mr. HALL of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) for yielding me the time. I do not intend to oppose the resolution. The reason why the chairman of the committee has opposed it, as I understand it, is more technical and procedural. It does not prejudice, I think, the vote of the House on this issue because he does not oppose the substantive part of it.

The substantive part of the bill which they are sending back to the Senate has to do with blood diamonds. That is a part that I have been working on along with the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF), the gentleman from New York (Mr. HOUGHTON), the gen-

tleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) and a lot of Members in a bipartisan way, as well as Senator FEINGOLD, Senator DURBIN, Senator GREGG, and Senator DEWINE have been very supportive of this legislation.

Blood diamonds are diamonds that are used to really fund wars in Africa, particularly in Sierra Leone, in Angola, and in the Congo. For years they have been using diamonds, either through the smuggled ways, or through a lot of different ways that they find themselves coming into America to fund the kind of wars that are going on; particularly in Sierra Leone, where a group of 500 ragtag rebels were able to increase their small little army to about 25,000 with very sophisticated training, drugs, guns, et cetera. They terrorized all of Sierra Leone. They have done the same thing in Angola. It has been used in Liberia in many different ways.

Why should we be interested in this as Americans? The reason why we should be interested in it is that Americans buy 65 percent of all the diamonds in the world every year. A lot of these blood diamonds are coming into our country. We essentially are funding wars in Africa. It is my understanding just in the last couple of days, I have been told through press accounts and through intelligence services, that even bin Laden has used the services of conflict diamonds to fund some of his activities in the world.

We have great bipartisan support on this, both Republicans and Democrats, in both the House and the Senate. We have 100 of the top human rights organizations that are firmly behind this legislation. And, for the first time, the diamond merchants, the diamond industry, is 100 percent behind this bill.

□ 1600

We were hoping that this would be accepted in this particular way. The gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS), the chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, he does not want to deal with it in this way. He wants to deal with it in another way, as I understand.

I hope that he and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) and I can have a colloquy on it from the standpoint of what they intend to do with this bill in their committee; and with that, I would urge the House to take up this issue soon, in a manner which is acceptable to the Committee on Ways and Means. And I would ask the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS), Chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, what his intentions are with the substance of the bill that he objects to.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, I thank the gentleman for the question, and the substance of the bill has been under discussion at the United Nations level on