

SENATE—Monday, March 26, 2001

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable SUSAN M. COLLINS, a Senator from the State of Maine.

PRAYER

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

Loving Father, You have taught us that the opposite of love is not hatred but indifference. Forgive us for indifference to the needs of the people around us. Here in the Senate, where debate over issues is the order of the day, it is a temptation to think of those with whom we disagree as adversaries, sometimes as political enemies. The very people who may need our prayers sometimes are neglected in our intercessory prayers because of their position on our cherished proposals. Often we become so intent on defeating political enemies that we forget they are fellow Americans, sisters and brothers in Your family, people You have placed on our agenda to affirm and encourage.

So may debate be to expose truth, creative compromise to maximize solutions, and caring relationships to enable an ambience of mutual support. Help each Senator, officer of the Senate, and Senate staff adopt the motto: "I may not agree with you, but I really care about you." Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable SUSAN M. COLLINS 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. THURMOND).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 26, 2001.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable SUSAN M. COLLINS, a Senator from the State of Maine, to perform the duties of the Chair.

STROM THURMOND,
President pro tempore.

Ms. COLLINS thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the following exceptions: The Senator from West Virginia, Mr. BYRD, or his designee, from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m.; the Senator from Wyoming, Mr. THOMAS, or his designee, from 11 a.m. to 12 noon.

Who yields time?

Mr. BYRD. Madam President, I yield such time as he may consume to the distinguished Senator from North Dakota, Mr. CONRAD.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

FORMULATION OF THE BUDGET

Mr. CONRAD. Madam President, I thank my outstanding colleague from West Virginia, Senator BYRD.

I rise today to discuss a matter of great importance to this body and I believe to the country that has to do with the formulation of a budget for the United States for the coming year.

Last week, the chairman of the Senate Budget Committee told me he does not intend to hold a markup in the Budget Committee to craft a budget resolution for this year.

All of the Democrats on the Budget Committee have written the chairman asking him to hold a markup. Today I again publicly ask the chairman of the Senate Budget Committee to allow the Budget Committee to do its work. Never in our history have we failed to have the Budget Committee write a budget resolution for the country—never. There is no reason not to try this year.

I understand we have an unusual circumstance because the Budget Committee is divided equally between Democrats and Republicans. That has never happened before either. I do not think any of us can know what would happen if we met as a committee, if we debated, deliberated, and voted; it is amazing what can happen when we listen to each other.

I just had the experience of the staff of the Senate Budget Committee, the staff of the chairman, totally misrepresenting the plan I have proposed—to-

tally misrepresenting it. It is clear to me they are not doing that on purpose because I know they are people of good will and they are honest people. I know that. I know they are not misrepresenting it willfully. They are misrepresenting it because they do not understand it. They are misrepresenting it because we have not had a full chance to hear each other. That is why we have committees. That is why we have held hearing after hearing on the questions of how should we craft a budget for the country for the coming year. That is precisely what the Budget Committee has done.

The result is there is no group of Senators that has spent more time analyzing what the budget should be. There is no group of Senators that has more fully considered the question of the revenue base, the question of what the spending ought to look like going forward, what we ought to do in terms of paying down national debt.

I think it would be a profound mistake for us to miss the chance to have the Budget Committee do what it was designed to do, which is to make the work of the larger body easier because of the concentration of effort of the members of the committee on the responsibility they have.

As I sat last week and heard my colleagues on the other side taking my budget proposal and completely misrepresenting it, I realized even more clearly why it is essential that we have a markup in the Budget Committee because that is one place where 22 Senators can sit across the table from each other and debate, discuss, explain, and vote.

If we just come out here on the floor, it is going to be chaos. Trying to write a budget for the United States out here on the floor of the Senate will be utterly chaotic. It is not the responsible thing to do.

The chairman says we are deadlocked. How do we know? We have never tried. We have never debated, discussed, or voted. That is the role of a committee. I do not think anybody can say where it would end.

Last week our colleagues were saying that my plan has more debt reduction in it than there is debt available to be retired. That is just not the case. The plan I have offered saves every penny of the Social Security surplus for Social Security. It saves every penny of the Medicare surplus for Medicare. That is a principle I think most people would endorse. We ought not raid the trust funds.

Then with what is left, my plan takes a third for a tax cut—\$900 billion—