

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. My final concern is, and I will let this rest, is that after tomorrow when we read the accounts of this, or when we go home and the American people ask us that question, the issue is going to be, Was it worth it? Was it, did it reach that level to really undermine the openness in government?

Our Nation is littered with examples of secrecy when it should have been openness. And as we've seen from those who've been here long before I have, who've gone through these previous times, in the five times and the most recent two or three times that some of those that spoke have been here, it proved to not reach that bar. And I'd just say, these are hallowed grounds. This is a precious country, the centerpiece of which is openness, and if we keep tipping away at this, we undermine the very fabric of our country. And I just submit to you, Mr. Leader, this is really what's at stake tonight.

Mr. BLUNT. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Yes.

Mr. BLUNT. I would just say to my friend that the information that I had hoped we would discuss today and still hope we will be able to discuss today is not, is information that most of the Members do not have and have not had access to. And I think our respect for each other as we approach this important decision would indicate that a further discussion, and my view was a discussion that could not be had because of the nature of some of the implications of what we do in an open session, would benefit the debate and the final decision at whatever point that decision will be made.

We do know tomorrow when we leave, the Senate's leaving and there will be no decision made that becomes law this week. But my thought was that all of the Members would benefit from a discussion based on information at a level that could not be disclosed in full debate and a discussion that I hoped would actually see the Members respond with appreciation for each other and our ability to talk about one or two items that were secret and what those items might mean, rather than say, Did that rise to the level of our time?

I don't know what all Members had planned to do tonight, but I suspect that you could argue, if you wanted to, that that discussion will lead, will be well worth the time. I also suspect if you don't want to, you could argue that it doesn't. But my intention was not to create animus among the Members, but to try to create an opportunity where all of our Members, as they have this ongoing discussion about foreign intelligence, have just a little broader window. I think it's important we all understand.

I'm not proposing we open the entire window. I'm not proposing that we go

to levels that we probably even among 431 of us who respect each other would want to go to. I thought it would be helpful. We've already debated whether to have this discussion far longer than I had anticipated the discussion taking. But I respect the Member's concern about something that we've only done three times in 30 years, haven't done very many times in the history of the Congress, and we may decide that the expectation of this discussion becomes so high that no Member would ever even consider saying, you know, I saw something here that I think we, it is truly secret so I can't talk about it in the full session. I think we should discuss it in a bigger session.

But if Members begin to think that that has to be that somebody has the plans, and we didn't know it, to nuclear weapons before it's worth having that discussion, we'll never have that discussion. That's not what I'm proposing at all, nor was I anticipating setting any kind of condition that my friends would have a problem with. I truly believe, after months of looking at this issue, that if the Members understood, even at the entry level, some of the problems it creates not to have a program in place that deals with these problems, the Members would reach a different conclusion. It may turn out that I am wrong on that, and I may take the advice of others who were here 30 years ago when we had three of these and decide this is never worth advancing again to my colleagues; but could we have a discussion in private about things that we can only discuss in private.

The option here is to discuss it in private or not to discuss it at all. And if my friends want to set a level of that discussion so high that if a Member walks out of here and says, well, the world wouldn't have survived without that session, we're never going to have a session where any more of us know the secret level items available to the Congress than know those items right now.

I was trying to be expansive in my sense of this discussion, rather than restrictive. By the end of the day, I'm beginning to think that may have been a mistake, but I'm still optimistic that we can have a discussion that the Members will think, you know, I don't know what I intended to do with the hour tonight, but that was actually as valuable as whatever it was I expected to do. And I would hope that would be the decision the Members would make, was this a more valuable hour for me as I looked to the future of these programs than the hour I might have spent doing whatever you would have been doing if you hadn't been here as Members of Congress talking about things that, if they're going to be talked about, can only be talked about in this way.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Well, just finally, in conclusion, I just want to say

that I know that I speak for every single Member of the House of Representatives, both Democrat and Republican, when I say that foremost in all of our minds, foremost is the security of the United States of America, and foremost in our minds is that we do that in the context of the foundations of this country, which are freedom and openness.

We walk a very delicate balance this evening. Let us hope we walk it right.

I withdraw my reservation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

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#### PERMISSION TO ADJOURN UPON DISSOLUTION OF SECRET SESSION

Mr. REYES. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the secret session of the House is dissolved pursuant to the previous order of the House, the House stand adjourned.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair desires to read to the Members the contents of clause 9 of rule XVII:

##### SECRET SESSION

Whenever confidential communications are received from the President of the United States, or whenever the Speaker or any Member shall inform the House that he has communications which he believes ought to be kept secret for the present, the House shall be cleared of all persons except the Members and officers thereof, and so continue during the reading of such communications, the debates and the proceedings thereon, unless otherwise ordered by the House.

The galleries of the House Chamber will be cleared of all persons and the House Chamber will be cleared of all persons except Members of the House and those officers and employees specified by the Speaker whose attendance on the floor is essential to the functioning of the secret session of the House. All proceedings in the House during such consideration shall be kept secret until otherwise ordered by the House.

In addition to the provisions of clause 13 of rule XXIII, which is applicable to all Members, officers and employees, every employee and officer present in the Chamber during the secret session will sign an oath of secrecy, which is in the Speaker's Ceremonial Office, room H-210.

The Chair will declare a recess long enough for this order to be carried out.