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Senate

(Legislative day of Tuesday, September 5, 1995)

The Senate met at 9 a.m., on the expiration of the recess, and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

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

Gracious God, You have chosen and called us to know, love, and serve You as leaders of our Nation. We praise You for the wondrous gift of life and the privilege of living this day to the fullest. You are for us and not against us and seek to liberate us from anything that would debilitate us in living and working with freedom and joy, peace and productivity. Thank You for setting us free from any burdens of worry and anxiety, so we can think creatively for You today. We commit to You the challenges and decisions we will face and thank You that You will give us exactly what we need to serve You with excellence each hour. We claim Your promise to give us strength today, peace in the pressures, light for the way; help from above, the gift of wisdom, the assurance of love. When this day is done we will be careful to give You the praise for all that You have accomplished through our efforts. Give us positive expectation of Your timely interventions and an attitude of gratitude for Your guidance. In the name of our Lord through whom we have assurance of life now and forever. Amen.

SCHEDULE

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, for the information of all Senators, this morning there will be a period of morning business until the hour of 9:30. At 9:30, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1976, the agricultural appropriations bill, and the pending Bryan amendment.

In accordance with the consent arrangement, following 15 minutes of debate there will be a rollcall vote on or in relation to the Bryan amendment.

All Senators should therefore be alert that there will be a rollcall vote at approximately 9:45 this morning.

Senators also should be reminded that following the recess for party conferences today, the Senate will resume the welfare bill, with a series of rollcall votes beginning at 2:45, which should complete action on the welfare reform bill.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THOMAS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business, not to extend beyond the hour of 9:30, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 5 minutes each.

The Senator from Missouri.

THE WELFARE SYSTEM

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, today we embark upon a most important responsibility, a responsibility that the people of this country called upon us to undertake in the elections of 1994. I must say that I believe the people have been yearning that Congress confront this challenge forthrightly and productively for years. But I believe that the Congress has finally gotten the message, and we have been working very hard to change the welfare system—to change it from a system for keeping the poor and maintain-

ing the poor. And, unfortunately, that is what we have done. We have maintained them and kept them poor through a system that should have become a transitional system, a system that would help people move from poverty to prosperity, move from welfare to work. And it is an important responsibility which we have.

The welfare system in the United States has been a system of failure. It has not been that the people have failed so much as the system has failed. We started out with an aggressive program in the 1960's to launch a war on poverty. And yet, in spite of the great war on poverty, spending over \$5 trillion, we have more people in poverty now than we did when we started the war on poverty. We have a greater percentage of the children of America on poverty than we did when we started the war on poverty.

It occurs to me that we have a great responsibility to change this system—to change it profoundly so that, instead of a system which ends up trapping people in lives of poverty, we make this a transitional system; that, when people really need help, we move them from the desperation of needing help to the opportunity of work and responsibility.

So this national system which has become a national disgrace is the topic now of national debate, and it should be the topic of action in the Senate today.

As you and I well know, and as our colleagues here in the Senate well know, the House has already acted forthrightly in this respect. There are differences between what the House has passed and what those of us in the Senate have been working on. But we can find a way to reconcile our differences, and I believe we can give to the President of the United States, who has said that he wants to end welfare as we know it, a constructive bill.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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During the past several weeks we have debated this measure, and we have properly spent substantial time on it because this is no small item. It does not just deal with the billions and billions of dollars. The welfare problem, the welfare challenge, deals with much money. It deals with the great set of natural and national resources—not just financial but human resources.

The fact of the matter is that the United States of America can ill afford to compete on the international scene, can ill afford to be a part of the challenge for productivity as one nation will seek to do and do better than another nation, if we have so many of our players that are not really on the field. We would not think of sending our team out to play another team for a Saturday or Sunday afternoon football game with half of our team not taking the field, not being capable of participating, and being ruled out of the system. Well, our team is a big team, and it is a strong team. It is a capable team in the United States. But we have too many that have been consigned to bench duty without any possibility of making it to the field. And we will not win in the competition of the international arena unless we find a way to bring people into productivity and out of poverty.

So the real challenge we face is changing the system, and changing it not just by tinkering around the edges. No rearrangement of the deck chairs on the welfare *Titanic* will get the job done. We need to have the kind of profound changes that will move people out of despair into industry, and out of hopelessness into opportunity.

So we will vote on a clear question today, and that is whether we will continue to fund the horror that came to define the United States welfare system and which came to detail the lives of individuals trapped in this system. Whether we have the courage to change that or not will be the real vote which we make today. I believe we have the courage to do that which is right, and I believe we will do so. And I believe we ought to do so.

I would say that this is not an ideal welfare bill. This is not something that is in my judgment the best that could be done. There are probably changes that almost every Member of this Chamber would make in the bill. I believe that the right thing to do would have been far broader, not just block granting AFDC with an option to block grant food stamps. In my judgment we should have had AFDC, food stamps, Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income. The big four of welfare should all have been in this bill, all reformed at the same time for a variety of reasons, such as stopping the insanity of entitlement spending. We should avoid cost shifting that would take people out of one program in which we removed the entitlement status and shove them over into another program which has remained as an entitlement. That kind of cost shifting should not be allowed. It should be avoided.

I would have preferred a more comprehensive bill. Obviously, I would have preferred one where the block grant for food stamps was mandated. I would have preferred one where we had Supplemental Security Income. I would have preferred a bill that would have had a more significant breadth, that had Medicaid in it as well. But we are making some first steps, and they are important first steps.

One of the important first steps is the reduction in bureaucracy here; the reduction in the redtape, the reduction in this micromanagement, this intermeddling micromanagement from the Federal Government which makes it very difficult for the States to adopt policies that will really make a difference and makes it very expensive when you have to comply with hundreds of pages of Federal bureaucratic redtape. It is expensive. Instead of money getting to the truly needy, instead of the resource making it to the population that wants to move from welfare to work, sometimes the resource gets clogged in the bottleneck of the bureaucracy and the money is spent there instead of being spent on the poor. We are going to reduce the number of regulatory impositions from Washington substantially. This bill will improve our ability to deliver the real kind of help that people need. That is important—maximum State flexibility.

Second, I believe it is important that we will end an entitlement. This philosophy that we do not care how much it costs, that as many people as can meet certain criteria are just entitled to self-appropriate to themselves—that has to stop. It is a major thing. First, reduce the bureaucracy; second, end entitlement; third, we are going to require work far more pervasively than ever before.

The American people have told us with a clarity that is unmistakable. We must require work, and, of course, provide the flexibility so that people can do in the various States and communities of this country what works there, not what somebody in Washington wants to impose, but to do simply what works.

This bill makes a statement that Washington does not have all the answers. We are now looking to the communities and the States to do what works there, to tailor programs, and to be experimental stations to say we will try this, and, if it works here, others might want to try it. But it should not be imposed on them because people should have an opportunity to do what works to move people from poverty to productivity. Washington, it may be said, has been the mad scientist seeking to impose its will. But the truth of the matter is we need to provide an opportunity for States to do that which works.

Well, this bill comes with an explicit admonition as well. This bill recognizes that Government alone will not solve these problems. And I think that

it is important for us to express nationally and as a part of policy that we really expect charitable and non-governmental institutions in this culture to rally to address this problem, and not expect the problem to be solved fully by Government.

So we have in this bill a specific invitation to private charities, nongovernmental entities, even faith-based organizations to participate in the solution of this serious challenge to the success of this society in the next century. And I believe that is a major step forward.

We have an opportunity. We have an opportunity to do something that is substantially in the best interests of the people of this country, something they have yearned for us to do. That is to change a welfare system which is badly broken, which has been the keeper of the poor and has kept people poor, which has managed to find more people in poverty after its great effort than less people in poverty.

The war on poverty has resulted in the children of America being taken as prisoners. We have to do something, and we have to do it well.

As I previously stated, this welfare reform bill is not perfect, but it does take the first steps. The lack of perfection in this bill, the absence of a mandate that the Food Stamp Program be sent to all the States, the lack of reforms to the SSI Program in the bill, are some of a number of things which keep it from being perfect but should not keep it from being passed.

This bill gives us the opportunity to say, "Let us pass this bill, but let the imperfections drive us to keep our focus and in the next year to continue to improve and extend it."

There has been a lot of talk in the last few weeks during the welfare reform debate about money and about resources. We know how desperately important it is for us to balance the budget, but the ultimate importance of this bill is not money. The savings we are talking about are the savings in lives and opportunities and, through those savings, the future of America. Our task in this welfare reform measure is then to save the lives and opportunities of citizens. To pass this welfare reform bill today would be a real step toward saving lives, and we must support it and must be driven by its imperfections to do even more when we reconvene next year.

THE DEATH OF STATE SENATOR JOHN PLEWA

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I am deeply saddened by the loss of a dear friend and former colleague, State Senator John Plewa.

I had the pleasure of serving with John in the legislature for 10 years, and for 8 of them in the State senate. He represented the people of Wisconsin, first in the assembly, and then in the