

Mr. LOTT addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. LOTT. Thank you, Mr. President.

SCHEDULE

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, this morning, to accommodate a number of requests by Senators, there will be a period for morning business until the hour of 12 noon. Following morning business, the Senate will proceed to executive session in order to consider the International Natural Rubber Treaty Agreement under the parameters of a previous unanimous-consent agreement. I understand that a rollcall vote will not be necessary on that treaty and that some of the debate time probably will be yielded back.

Following the disposition of that treaty, the Senate may be asked to turn to consideration of any of the following matters: the pipeline safety bill, with only one nongermane issue remaining unresolved; the work force development conference report—we attempted to reach a time agreement on that one, but have been unsuccessful; we will keep working on that—the debate on the veto message to accompany the partial-birth abortion bill override, the NIH reauthorization bill, or any other items that can be cleared for action.

The Senate may also be asked to begin consideration of the continuing resolution, if an agreement can be reached as to how to proceed on that. I continue to say that I would be glad to begin the debate and allow amendments to be offered as long as there is some order to it as to what we can expect to happen and when it would be completed. But just to start down the trail without any end in sight, without any certainty as to how we proceed, I do not believe is in the best interest of the Senate. We will continue to work on that. I hope we will be able to begin that appropriations bill today.

We do have the end of the fiscal year next week, on Monday as a matter of fact. It is imperative that we finish the work on that bill as quickly as possible.

I note that there are very important negotiations underway now to wrap up, not only the amounts in that continuing resolution, but also language that would be included. We are hoping we will be able to take up the illegal immigration bill also in some form before we go out for the year.

Senators should be alerted that rollcall votes are expected to occur throughout the day, but we do not have any agreed-to time right now as to when that might happen.

One final cautionary note. I do not feel a sense of urgency yet. I think Senators are still feeling, well, we can agree later. Time is running out. Example A is NIH reauthorization. Everybody says they want it, but we continue to not be able to bring it up. Today is the last day for NIH. If we do

not get an agreement, I am going to call it up, somebody is going to have to come over here and object, and a very, very important piece of legislation that everybody knows we should pass will be gone for the year, because beyond today—Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday—we are going to be involved in the partial-birth abortion ban debate and a vote tomorrow, and we are going to be involved in the continuing resolution, the DOD appropriations conference report, and the illegal immigration reform bill. There will not be any time for any other chit-chat, even 1 hour on these other issues.

So for those of you who are interested in parks, those of you interested in NIH, those of you who think pipeline safety is something we should do—by the way, that legislation needs to be done before the end of the month also or we are going to have a lot of expiring laws on our hands. I hope the Senators will get serious. I have my doubt that they are serious. But I also have my limits in what I can do working with the Democratic leader because we have people coming and saying, “Well, can we just have 6 hours? 4 hours? 1 hour?” They are all gone. Today is the day. Do it today or it will be gone for the year.

I yield the floor, Mr. President.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GREGG). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

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 12 noon, with Senators permitted to speak for not to exceed 5 minutes each.

Senator THOMAS from Wyoming is recognized for a period of 30 minutes.

Mr. THOMAS. Thank you, Mr. President.

ELECTION TIME IS DECISION TIME

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, several of us want to continue our discussions of the upcoming election, discussions that have to do with the issues that are involved. It is election time. Of course, as evidenced by what the leader said today, the time is short. It is election time, and it is decision time. This is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Therefore, there is a responsibility for all of us, as voters, of course, to participate in the election, to participate as informed voters.

If we are to have self-government, then the decisions and the direction that this country takes must be the result of the composite wisdom of voters. That time has arrived.

It seems almost a paradox that in a time when technically we have more

information available to us than we have ever had in history—imagine 100 years ago how much we knew in Wyoming about what was going on in Washington. Very little. If we did, it was much after the event had happened. Now we know instantly, of course. The paradox is that it seems to me it is more difficult for us as voters now to kind of weed out among all the stuff that is out there as to what the real issues are. Whether it is the fault of the media, whether it is the idea of the media picking out the emotional things, whether it is the idea of professional campaign planners who spin and intentionally blur the issues, whether it is a Congress and an administration that seek to make the choices less clear, I do not know. Perhaps it is a combination of each of those.

Nevertheless, you and I have a responsibility to choose. On my way back Sunday, I had a book I have been intending to read about the Constitution. I was struck by the idea that the Constitution, and more particularly the Bill of Rights, was designed exclusively to limit the powers of Government. You do not find in the Bill of Rights, the Government will do this, the Government shall do this, the Government shall provide that. It says, the Government “shall not.”

The great concern of our forefathers was to make sure that we limit the central Government, limit the power of central Government. Still, it seems to me, in our own way, in our own judgment, that is the choice we make. How do we see the Government? What do we think the role of the Federal Government is? Is it to provide all the little nice things we would like to have happen personally in our lives? Every day is a new program for something that is probably pretty nice. Is that the role? Or is the role more one of insuring freedom, insuring opportunity, insuring an environment in which the private sector can function, providing for strong local government, State and county?

These are the decisions, and I know my prejudices are pretty well arranged. I seek to have a Federal Government that is the protector of those things, rather than a provider of those things. Obviously, there are things that are appropriate for the Federal Government to do—in interstate commerce, in defense and those kind of things. Those are the decisions that we will make. I hope each of us is prepared to do that.

I happen to think we have begun to do some of those things in the last 2 years in this Congress, and, in fact, this has been one of the most effective Congresses we have had for a very long time. Unfortunately, our minority leader does not agree with that. He was quoted as saying this has not been a productive Congress. I am sorry to hear him say that. I do not agree. We will talk about a number of things that have been done, things I believe move us more into the direction of a smaller Federal Government, a less expensive Federal Government, a less regulated society.