

first. Robert Browning surely appreciated the mysteries and the joys of spring. As a poet must do if his works are to stand the test of time, he has distilled a deep feeling, the abiding joy and contentment in the Creator's handiwork, and decanted it in words of pure and simple beauty:

The year's at the spring,
And day's at the morn,
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn:
God's in his heaven—[and]
All's right with the world!

The vernal equinox is at hand, Mr. President, tolling its celestial chime of spring. Oh, welcome, spring! What a difference it makes. At the thought of spring, again to the words of William Wordsworth, "And then my heart with pleasure fills, and dances with the daffodils."

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRAMS. Thank you very much.

RECOGNITION OF NATIONAL AGRICULTURE WEEK

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon just briefly to recognize National Agriculture Week. It is no secret that America's farmers are the most productive in the world, and it is so appropriate that we take a few moments to recognize their many, many contributions.

Agriculture is traditionally viewed as small family farms producing for a regional market. Local grain elevators, shipping interests, processors, banks, and consumers are all vital components in meeting the demands of a continually changing domestic and world market.

From the grocery store in Minneapolis to the rural implement dealer, each of us has an interest in ensuring a vibrant agricultural economy. But the foundation remains the individual producer. These are families who rise each morning and labor into the night to provide each of us the food we eat. These independent-minded individuals are heavy on common sense, and they are not predisposed to taking short cuts or pat answers.

Without a doubt, some of the best advice I receive comes from the savvy business men and women who are commonly called "farmers."

I was raised on an old-fashioned dairy farm in rural Minnesota. I know firsthand the hard work and dedication that it takes to do a job that is often overlooked and unrecognized.

However, a farmer's responsibility goes far beyond producing a crop or making sure that the cows are milked. To ensure continued productivity, he also must be an environmental steward of the land that he cultivates. In many cases, this leads to lower fertilizer inputs and enhanced wildlife habitat.

Mr. President, the last few years have brought about some great changes in agriculture. The 1996 farm bill was a step, I believe, in the right direction, yet the job is not yet finished. If farmers are to produce for the marketplace, we must give them the tools they need to manage their operations.

This includes addressing such issues as regulatory reform, risk-management options, and Federal crop insurance reforms. By providing farmers with the flexibility to manage their own businesses, we are ensuring a better future for everyone.

In an effort to produce for changing markets, groups of farmers across Minnesota are exploring ways to enhance their income and productivity through value-added ventures and cooperative research agreements.

It is this spirit of innovation that should be encouraged and not stifled by the heavy hand of Government. These farmers are the leaders of tomorrow who will ensure a safe and steady food supply for America and the world well into the next century.

So in short, Mr. President, we owe all those involved in agriculture a debt of gratitude, and I am very proud to join my colleagues in recognizing the outstanding contributions of America's agricultural sector.

With that, Mr. President, I thank you and yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Thursday, March 19, 1998, the federal debt stood at \$5,537,630,079,097.83 (Five trillion, five hundred thirty-seven billion, six hundred thirty million, seventy-nine thou-

sand, ninety-seven hundred dollars and eighty-three cents).

One year ago, March 19, 1997, the federal debt stood at \$5,369,097,000,000 (Five trillion, three hundred sixty-nine billion, ninety-seven million).

Five years ago, March 19, 1993, the federal debt stood at \$4,216,608,000,000 (Four trillion, two hundred sixteen billion, six hundred eight million).

Twenty-five years ago, March 19, 1973, the federal debt stood at \$456,926,000,000 (Four hundred fifty-six billion, nine hundred twenty-six million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$5 trillion—\$5,080,604,079,097.83 (five trillion, eighty billion, six hundred and four million, seventy-nine thousand, ninety-seven dollars and eighty-three cents) during the past 25 years.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting a treaty which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bill, previously received from the House of Representatives for the concurrence of the Senate, was read twice, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 2294. An act to make improvements in the operation and administration of the Federal courts, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. DOMENICI, from the Committee on the Budget, without amendment:

S. Con. Res. 86. An original concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal years 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2003 and revising the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 1998 (Rept. No. 105-170).

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second time by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. WYDEN (for himself and Mr. SMITH of Oregon):

S. 1807. A bill to transfer administrative jurisdiction over certain parcels of public domain land in Lake County, Oregon, to facilitate management of the land, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. REED (for himself, Mr. KENNEDY, and Mrs. MURRAY):

S. 1808. A bill to amend title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act and part 7 of subtitle B of title I of the Employee Retirement