

So what we are trying to do is not to eliminate that price differential because that would be too big a step to take at once. We are trying to reduce the price differential—not eliminate it, reduce it. USDA has come up with a program and 97 percent of the farmers in this country have voted for the change in the present milk pricing program. I am not suggesting we need to eliminate the price differential at this time. But let's accept the reduction of the price differential in view of the fact that the present system is archaic and makes no sense.

Again, coming over from the House is legislation that continues to mandate that the old Depression-era pricing system be continued. May I also say the present system, both with respect to the Northeast Dairy Compact and the pricing system, was mandated to conclude on October 1, and we would put in a new system. But before October 1, there was a Federal judge in Vermont who challenged that kind of outcome. So right now it is tied up in the courts and nothing is going to happen. The present system will stay until at least the courts rule on the validity of a new system.

So I suggested, and many have suggested, there be no dairy language in the omnibus; just don't say anything and let's let this thing roll because it is tied up in the courts now anyhow, and we can discuss it next year.

No, promises have been made. People have been won over in one way or another. Other agendas are on the table. So today it comes in an omnibus bill, with the Northeast Dairy Compact renewed. Price fixing cartels, does any Senator want to vote for that? Price fixing cartels, not just for the Northeast, because if you accept it in the Northeast you accept it elsewhere; not just on milk, because a cartel is not uniquely suited to milk. It can be on any other commodity anywhere.

Does the Senate want to go on record as supporting price fixing cartels in this country? Do we want to tear up the American economy in that way? That comes in the omnibus tonight. We are going to vote on that.

We are also going to vote on going back to the old milk marketing price system which, again, is totally outmoded. The USDA has come up with a new system. I am very upset, obviously, and I am obviously going to fight that omnibus bill to its conclusion in any way I can, to filibuster it and to require everything be done to demonstrate to us and to the American people that there is a giant bill coming down the pike which has at least an element in it which is not acceptable, in my judgment, to how America is supposed to function.

We are also considering a continuing resolution that will be brought to the floor momentarily, I understand. Of course, one of the options we have is to vote against a continuing resolution, which would, in effect, shut down the Government at midnight tonight. I

could object to the CR and the Government would shut down. That is something I had considered. But if we do that or if I do that, obviously, it is a huge step, and there are many tens of thousands of people who would be out of a job, with enormous dislocations all across our country. It is a huge step one does not take easily. It is not a step I want to take. It is not a step I am going to take because I do not think it represents responsible action on my part. If some of the other people in this body want to act in a way I consider to be irresponsible and challenge me to be irresponsible—I am not an irresponsible person. Shutting down the Government is a huge, huge decision. One does not take it lightly. I am not going to make that decision over this issue.

But I do want to point out to my colleagues that some strong-arm tactics are at work here. Allowing price fixing cartels is a bad thing for this country. I very much hope we can and will find a way to undo the damage of price fixing cartels in an outmoded milk marketing system in the very near future.

Having said that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, there are a number of issues we are working on, but we have one unanimous consent request with regard to the loan guarantee for the satellite local situation we have worked out.

I ask unanimous consent that no later than March 30, 2000, if no Senate committee has reported a bill limited to providing loan guarantees to establish local television service to rural areas by satellite and other means, the Republican leader, or his designee, or the Democratic leader, or his designee, be recognized to introduce a bill limited to sections 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2006 of the conference report accompanying H.R. 1554 providing such loan guarantees, and that the Senate immediately begin consideration of the bill with relevant first-degree amendments in order and second-degree amendments that are relevant to the first-degree amendment proposed to be amended. Further, that if legislation is reported that is limited to such loan guarantees, it be considered on or before March 30 and be open to relevant amendments as provided above. Further, that upon disposition of all amendments, the bill be read a third time and passed, with no intervening action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. DASCHLE. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I compliment the majority leader. This is the result of ongoing discussions we have had for some time. I appreciate

very much the involvement and the work done by the distinguished Senator from Montana. This accomplishes much of what we hoped we could do. It is not everything. I am very hopeful we can get this done before April 1, but the majority leader has made as strong a commitment to me personally, and I am sure he is prepared to do it on the record, that he will work with us to accomplish the objectives laid out in this unanimous consent agreement.

I appreciate, as well, the cooperation of the distinguished Banking Committee chairman, and I believe as a result of the effort we have been able to demonstrate in getting to this point, we will achieve our goal. We cannot leave rural America out. We will have an opportunity to provide service to them. This will give us the vehicle to make that happen. So I do not object.

Mr. BAUCUS. Reserving the right to object.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, before the Senator reserves the right to object, I want to add my own personal comments rather than just the dry UC that I gave.

I, too, commend and thank the other Senator from Montana, Mr. BURNS, for his efforts in this area and for his tenacity. In fact, this very day, he ruined my lunch talking to me about this issue. I know Senator BAUCUS believes very strongly in it.

It is not just a Montana issue. This is important in South Dakota and this is important in Mississippi. This is important nationwide. If we are going to get this satellite local-to-local service in these smaller markets, we have to have this opportunity, but we want to make sure it is a loan guarantee that will work, that is actually going to do the job, that is not in some way going to improperly benefit any one individual or group of individuals, for that matter, and that it has been carefully thought through.

Again, I am absolutely determined to get this done. I will not only live up to this UC, which I have to, but I will do it with a great deal of vigor and activity.

I thank the Senator from Texas for his willingness to focus on this and get it done by a date certain and make sure he and other committees have added to it to make sure we do it right.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana is recognized.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I earlier objected to bringing up the continuing resolution because I felt it made much more sense to include the loan guarantee along with the other provisions in the omnibus bill that will be taken up later providing for local-to-local satellite network service.

I thank the Senator from Mississippi, as well as my colleague from Montana. I have been working with my colleague today to figure out some way to lock in even more having loan guarantees passed by this body and by the other body.

The other body has made a similar commitment in a colloquy about 2

hours ago to make sure this is passed so rural viewers of America have the opportunity to have local satellite service.

I compliment my friend from Montana for working so hard on this. He has worked very hard, as well as others. I am not going to hold up the continuing resolution to shut down the Government. In the whole scheme of things, we have our own priorities and know what the priorities should be. But it is important to get this provision in here because it does make it even more certain we are going to get this loan guarantee provision passed in the next year.

I thank the majority leader. He has been very gracious in working this out, as well as the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, who I know wants to work this out as well, and my good friend from Montana. I also thank the Banking Committee chairman. He has been very helpful.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is a unanimous consent request before the Senate. Is there objection?

Mr. BURNS. Reserving the right to object, and I will not object, this is a compromise to facilitate the passage of this omnibus bill. We have worked a long time on this. We are working up to a deadline where we could see some blue screens after December 31. But one cannot ignore the fact that even our satellite viewers should be able to receive local broadcasts or network stations in their local areas. The only way we will ever provide any competition for the cables under the rules they live by, under must carry, and still have a viable satellite service that will compete with cables is through this method.

I appreciate the commitment of the Senator from Texas, the chairman of the Banking Committee. I thank my friend from Montana. He has worked hard on this. I thank the majority leader. Without their commitments, we would be talking a different tune now. I also commend the leadership in the House of Representatives for making the same commitment that this legislation be passed early next year.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. A unanimous consent request is before the Senate. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BYRD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator from Texas yield to the Senator from West Virginia?

Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President, I was going to speak on this subject of the satellite bill, but I yield to the Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized as one of the managers of the continuing resolution. I am entitled to that recognition. I ask I be recognized immediately after the distinguished Senator from Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia has pro-

pounded a unanimous consent request. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President, I thank my colleagues. This has obviously been a very difficult issue. We passed the satellite bill in the Senate unanimously. I think every Member of the Senate realizes the ability to receive television signals in America is critically important. On Saturday, you want to watch Texas A&M. On Sunday, you want to watch the Dallas Cowboys. And one's life is diminished if you cannot do either one of those things.

The problem we had was we passed a bill in the Senate to set up the legal structure to get that job done. They passed a bill in the House to do the same. Neither bill had any loan guarantee language in it. The conferees realized there was a problem, but in their haste to get it done, it is my opinion that we ended up with language that was as good as anybody could have written during that short period of time.

Under the agreement we have reached, we have an opportunity to have representatives of the television stations, the satellite companies, and potential Internet suppliers come in. We have the ability to look at the technology.

We have the ability to look at loan guarantees we have given in the past. We have the ability to get the input of the Treasury. Hopefully, we will have the ability to put together a bill that will maximize the chances that every American will have access to their local television station.

I want my colleagues to know, as I have said many times as this debate has evolved, I intend, by the 30th of March, to report a bill from the Banking Committee. It is my goal not only to write a bill that will deal with this problem, but I hope we can develop a prototype for the future, where we recognize that there are some social goals that are not necessarily met by market forces, and that the market by itself might not provide this service which we have deemed to be important.

The question then is: What can you do to provide this service at the lowest possible cost and in the most efficient manner? It is my goal to put together a bill that will achieve that goal and perhaps be a prototype for similar problems in the future.

So I thank my colleagues. Probably as much effort has gone into this one little issue as anything throughout this whole process. It is an important issue. It involved an important principle. I think we have reached a good conclusion. I am happy about it. I believe, when we complete it, that every Member of the Senate and every Member of Congress and, hopefully, everybody who has a satellite dish or wants one will be happy about it as well.

I thank my colleagues.

Mr. BYRD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I send to the desk an amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

Mr. BYRD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. BYRD. I yield to the majority leader first.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia is yielding to the majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, would the majority leader yield?

Mr. COVERDELL addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. COVERDELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BURNS). Objection is heard.

The clerk will continue to call the roll.

The bill clerk continued with the call of the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. FEINGOLD. I object.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded so that the Senator from Minnesota can—

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I object until I can read this.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The clerk will continue the call of the roll.

The bill clerk continued with the call of the roll.

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

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The bill clerk continued with the call of the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.J. RES. 82, H.J. RES. 83, AND H.R. 3194

Mr. LOTT. I thank my colleagues for not objecting.

Mr. President, I have a unanimous consent request that has been very