its costs. However, a line's contribution to a railroad's profits should not be the only test by which to justify the line's continued existence.

The economic considerations that led the Federal government, as well as state and local governments, to aid in the initial construction of the Nation's rail system apply today almost as much as then, and we must be less than tolerant of the vital flow of commerce by cutting off transportation. In the twentieth century, the death of the affected communities. From the government's point of view, the social and economic costs and benefits to those dependent on the railroads must be brought into the calculation of whether or not to continue rail services.

Mr. President, since 1920 the Interstate Commerce Commission has permitted over 60,000 miles of roadway to be abandoned. Almost 14,000 miles of track have been abandoned in the last 10 years alone.

Rail transportation for many of our Nation's smaller communities and industries located in rural areas is the only mode of bulk transportation available. Discontinuance of this service to these communities means their certain demise.

If we are serious in our commitment to pursuing a more balanced national growth strategy in this country and in revitalizing our Nation's rural areas and smaller communities as a part of such a strategy, then we must take a closer look at the importance of continued rail transportation to their future growth and development.

Mr. President, this is just one more example of how this Nation has failed to analyze and act upon economic policies that pose a threat to the overall balanced growth and development of the country and failed to plan with these interrelationships clearly in mind.

We now have several Federal programs to provide assistance in expanding jobs and industry in rural areas and in our smaller communities. Many more have been proposed. Yet, in other parts of our Government we not only permit, but also encourage abandonment of rail service, which often is vital to the successful operation of the very businesses that we are trying to help with other Federal programs.

Such inconsistencies in purpose are too often found within our public and private decisionmaking process and steps should be taken to minimize such conflicts.

Mr. President, abandonment of rail way trackage is creating serious economic and social problems for many Minnesota communities. If a moratorium can be declared on these abandonments, ways and means might be found to continue rail service to them. We need time to study these questions including possible subsidies to the railroads themselves in order to continue service where needed.

SENATE RESOLUTION 123—SUBMISSION OF A RESOLUTION TO AMEND THE STANDING RULES OF THE SENATE

(Referred to the Committee on Rules and Administration.)

Mr. MONDALE. Mr. President, events of recent months have highlighted perhaps more starkly than ever before the dangers of the widening gulf between the executive branch and the legislative branch. Faced with unprecedented Presidential use of impoundment and claims of Executive privilege, we in Congress have often found ourselves unable to obtain the vital information we need on a wide variety of policies affecting the Nation.

We have been faced with continued attempts by the Executive to usurp power from the legislative branch and increasing inability to effectively focus public attention on the dangers of the usurpation of our congressional prerogatives. The impoundment of funds within the executive branch, Cabinet and executive agency officials face an increasing inability to make and coordinate with their own jurisdictions.

The events surrounding the Watergate affair have revealed the dangers inherent in the ability of a few men on the White House staff—responsible to no one, mostly without the sobering experience of electoral politics, and beyond the reach of Congress—愿望 control policy. Hopefully, these events will lead to a rethinking in the executive branch. Cabinet and executive agency officials face an increasing inability to make and coordinate within their own jurisdictions.

As part of this rethinking, we should attempt in as many ways as possible to increase Congress's ability to conduct meaningful dialogue with those officials in the executive branch in whose offices reposition responsible for policy decisions should rest. This attempt should focus on keeping both Congress and the Cabinet officers and agency heads in better touch with each other.

By making those executive branch figures whose confirmation by the Senate is required by law more accountable to the people—through the Congress—we will enable the balance of power to shift away from a White House staff of a few unelected and unresponsive men and reassert the power of the Congress and the Cabinet officers.

As a first step in this direction, I am submitting today a Senate resolution to provide for the establishment of a "Question and Report Period," somewhat analogous to that in use in many Parliaments and others around the world.

This is neither a new or a radical idea. It was given notice by the first Congress, which in creating the Office of Secretary of the Treasury, declared that "he shall make report and give information by either branch of the legislature either in person or in writing of the principal Officer of the department or agency head who has indicated his readiness to answer. To conserve time and coordination of questions, in subject-matter areas, any one question shall be taken up by questions approved by one committee.

In the latter half of each question period, oral questions may be asked, but these should be limited to the subject matter of the written questions. The time in this latter hour will be equally controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the committee which has approved the questions.

Senators will be given advance notice of question period proceedings by printing of the time of each question period and the written questions to be answered in the Record, and the proceedings of the question period will be printed in the Record.

In addition, the resolution provides that question period proceedings may be televised and broadcast on radio live. In an era of mass communication, it is important to provide for both print and electronic media coverage to insure wide dissemination of the proceedings conducted under provisions of this resolution.

During the early 1940's, Walter Lippmann noted that—

The two branches of Government (executive and legislative) will quarrel endlessly at the expense of the Nation, depleting it of the unity it needs and the collective wisdom
it should have, as long as the responsible men at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue deal with one another suspiciously and at arm's length.

Never has that remark been more true today. And never has there been the need for a regularized procedure during which Congress can question the policies of the executive branch, and the executive branch can question the policies of Congress. It is only by the joint efforts of both branches of government that we can defend their proposals and actions. Essential to this process is its openness. In contrast to congressional investigative committees, the entire Senate—not just a few Senators—will be able to question and hear the executive branch's defense.

Hopefully, this system of close questioning of Cabinet-level officers will result in Cabinet posts being filled with men and women whose responsibility for defending articulately the proposals or actions of an administration will lead to a greater involvement for those individuals in formulating the policies and actions of their departments.

Most importantly, this resolution will enable Congress and the people to secure the Nation's right to have free and open debate on the central policies guiding the Nation.

Perhaps President Nixon best described both the aura and the importance of the question period device, after he had witnessed the British House of Commons Question Hour in 1969:

"It was an inspiring and compelling experience, one for which I am deeply grateful. And it was an experience in which I came away with a deep appreciation and respect for the ability of the British parliamentarian to stand up during the Question period and answer so effectively. I believe that the British system is made more of an ordeal than our press conference.

Whether or not such a procedure is an ordeal, it is without doubt a most effective means of visible communication between the executive and legislative branches. My proposal will not—and was not designed to—replace or supplant any of the valuable committee processes already in existence. In fact, the proposal, as I have outlined it, specifically preserves for committees the right to approve questions before the House or Senate is in session. The right to approve questions before the House is in session is inherent in the Constitution and should be protected. In contrast to congressional investigatory committees, the entire Senate—not just a few Senators—will be able to question and hear the executive branch's defense.

This system will require the selection of the strongest men to be heads of departments, and will require them to be well equipped with the knowledge of their offices. It will also require the strongest men to be the officers of Congress capable of debating at the highest level in the United States. It will bring these strong men in contact, perhaps into conflict, to advance the public weal, and thus stimulate their abilities and the public trust in Government. And, as the late Adlai Stevenson noted:

"Public confidence in the integrity of the government is indispensable to faith in democracy; and when we lose faith in the system we have lost faith in everything we fight for."

We must begin restoration of this public trust in Government. And, as a select committee of the Senate noted in 1881, the question period may enable us to begin this task:

"This system will require the selection of the strongest men to be heads of departments, and will require them to be well equipped with the knowledge of their offices. It will also require the strongest men to be the officers of Congress capable of debating at the highest level in the United States. It will bring these strong men in contact, perhaps into conflict, to advance the public weal, and thus stimulate their abilities and the public trust in Government."

Mr President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of this resolution be printed in the Record at the conclusion of my remarks.

There being no objection, the resolution was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

"RES. 123
Resolved, That Rule X of the Standing Rules of the Senate is amended by adding at the end thereof the following new paragraph:
"3. There shall be held in the Senate, on at least one day in any one calendar week in which the Senate is in session a question and report period, which shall not consume more than two hours, during which heads of executive departments and agencies are requested to answer orally, written or oral questions propounded by Members of the Senate. Each written question shall be submitted in triplicate to the committee having jurisdiction of the subject matter of such question, and, if approved by such committee, shall be directed to the head officer of the department or agency concerned, with an invitation to appear before the Senate, and one copy to the Committee on Rules and Administration shall be submitted to the Committee on Rules and Administration, with a request for allotment of time in a question period to answer such question. Subject to the limitations prescribed in this paragraph, the Committee on Rules and Administration shall determine the date for, and the length of time of, each question period and shall allot the time in each question period to the head officer of a department or agency to answer orally, written or oral questions propounded by Members of the Senate. Written questions shall be submitted to the committee for approval prior to the question period."

The proposed farm bill, farmers would be authorized to receive preliminary payments if the market prices are low, in the case of wheat until December, in the case of corn until the following March, and in the case of cotton until the following January.

Under the 1970 Agricultural Act, producers receive preliminary payments after July 1 of each year. However, under the proposed farm bill, farmers would receive payments if market prices fell below "target" prices established under the new farm bill. It would authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to advance to producers, as soon as practicable after the end of the second month of the marketing season for wheat, feed grains, and cotton, an amount equal to 65 percent of the Secretary's estimate of total payments, if any, necessary to meet the requirements of the target price guarantee for each commodity.