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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 same 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 and must be kept in mind. To stop the vital flow of commerce by cutting off transportation may spell 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 railway to be abandoned. Almost 14,000 miles of trackage has 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 the total effect of various policies on 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 railway 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. In addition we have seen that, even within the executive branch, Cabinet and executive agency officers face an increasing inability to make and coordinate within 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—to control policy. Hopefully, these events will lead to a rethinking of the respective roles of the legislative and the executive branches.

As part of this rethinking, we should attempt in as many ways as possible to increase Congress' ability to conduct meaningful dialogue with those officials in the executive branch in whose offices responsibility for policymaking 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 proper role 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 Parliamentary systems 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 to either branch of the legislature either in person or in writing" as either House might require. Indeed, during this first Congress, Cabinet officers appeared before the House 8 times, and before the Senate 14 times.

In 1864, a select committee of the House and in 1881, a select committee of the Senate recommended the right to the floor of both Houses for Cabinet officers both to answer questions and to participate in debate. In 1912, President Taft, in a message to Congress, made virtually the same recommendation. And throughout the 1940's and 1950's, Senator Estes Kefauver championed the idea of a "question hour" and first introduced legislation of the type I am introducing today.

Nor does this proposal affect the constitutional doctrine of separation of powers. The Constitution clearly gives

the President the power to "require the opinion in writing of the principal officer in each of the executive departments upon any subject appertaining to the duties of their respective offices." This proposal would not diminish this right in the slightest. It merely would allow the legislative branch the ability to add an additional dimension to the role of these executive officers—that of spirited and productive dialog with members of the legislative branch.

The proposal does not call for the subpoenaing of Executive officers to appear before the Senate. It is framed in terms of "requests" to appear, because the central thrust of this proposal is to increase—rather than decrease—the dialog between and mutual responsibilities of Cabinet-level officers and the Senate.

Under terms of this proposal, the heads of executive departments and agencies would be requested to answer orally, both written and oral questions propounded by Members of the Senate. Such a question period would occur at least once every week when the Senate is in session, and would last for no more than 2 hours. Senators would submit written questions to the committee having jurisdiction over the subject matter of the question, and if the committee approves the question, it would be transmitted to the head of the department or agency involved, with an invitation to appear before the Senate.

The Committee on Rules and Administration would also receive a copy of the question, along with a request for allotment of time in a question period to provide for the answering of the question. The Rules Committee will determine the dates and length of time of each question period, and will allot the time in such period to the department or agency head who has indicated his readiness to answer. To conserve time and consolidate questioning in subject-matter areas, any one question period shall be taken up by questions approved by one committee.

In the latter half of each question period, oral questions may be asked, but they must be germane 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 at least 2 days before the question period 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, depriving 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 than 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's responsible officers 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 our 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 your Question period is much 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 procedures now available to this body. In fact, the proposal, as I have outlined it, specifically preserves for committees the right to approve questions before they are brought to the attention of the Executive officer whose answer is requested by a Senator.

Rather, this proposal is designed to give the Congress—and the American people—the right to information concerning important policies and actions of the executive branch, in a forum carefully controlled by time and germaneness so as to insure that productive questioning results.

When Senator Kefauver proposed question-period legislation in the mid-1940's, the support of the American people for this idea was clearly evident. A Gallup poll conducted in the fall of 1943 showed 72 percent in favor of the proposal, and only 7 percent opposed.

Clearly, this idea has new and more crucial relevance today. The faith of the American people in their Government has fallen steadily. According to a Harris poll conducted last November, only 27 percent of the American people have

"a great deal of confidence" in the executive branch of the Government—a drop from 41 percent in 1966.

We must stop this decline of trust in Government. We must, at this crucial juncture in relations between the executive and legislative branch, attempt to restore both Congress' power to know and the power of Cabinet officers—rather than White House staff—to formulate policy and publicly defend that policy.

The resolution which I am introducing today is certainly not the entire solution to this monumental problem. But without it, the trust of the American people in their Government may continue to erode. 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 leaders of Congress and participate in debate. It will bring these strong men in contact, perhaps into conflict, to advance the public weal, and thus stimulate their abilities and their efforts and will thus assuredly result in the good of the country.

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:

S. 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 and 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, one copy shall be transmitted to the head of the department or agency concerned, with an invitation to appear before the Senate, and one copy 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 of a department or independent agency who has indicated to the committee his readiness to deliver oral answers to the questions transmitted to him. All written questions propounded in any one question period shall be approved by one committee. The latter half of each question period shall be reserved for oral questions which shall be germane to the subject matter of the written ques-

tions by Members of the Senate, one-half of such time to be controlled by the chairman of the committee which has approved the written questions propounded in such question period and one-half by the ranking minority member of such committee. The time of each question period and the written questions to be answered in such period shall be printed in two daily editions of the RECORD appearing before the day on which such question periods is to be held, and the proceedings during the question period shall be printed in the RECORD for such day. Live television and radio coverage of proceedings authorized under this paragraph shall be permitted. The Committee on Rules and Administration shall make all appropriate arrangements and establish appropriate procedures for providing such coverage."

AMENDMENT OF AGRICULTURAL ACT OF 1970—AMENDMENTS

AMENDMENT NO. 174

(Ordered to be printed, and to lie on the table.)

Mr. BUCKLEY submitted amendments, intended to be proposed by him, to the bill (S. 1888) to extend and amend the Agricultural Act of 1970 for the purpose of assuring consumers of plentiful supplies of food and fiber at reasonable prices.

AMENDMENT NO. 175

(Ordered to be printed, and to lie on the table.)

Mr. CASE (for himself and Mr. KENNEDY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by them, jointly, to Senate bill 1888, supra.

AMENDMENT NO. 176

(Ordered to be printed, and to lie on the table.)

Mr. KENNEDY (for himself and Mr. CASE) submitted an amendment, intended to be proposed by them, jointly, to Senate bill 1888, supra.

AMENDMENT NO. 178

(Ordered to be printed, and to lie on the table.)

Mr. MONDALE. Mr. President, I am today submitting an amendment to S. 1888, the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973.

The purpose of my amendment is to provide for an advance payment to producers in the event that market prices fall 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 beginning 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 guarantees for each commodity.

Under the 1970 Agricultural Act, producer receive preliminary payments after July 1 of each year. However, under the proposed farm bill, farmers would not receive payments if 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.

The purpose of S. 1888 is to assure the production of adequate supplies of food and fiber to consumers by insuring producers against losses if their expanded