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Congressional Record S. 7117 - Proposed Extension of Surtax

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Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, the present proposal to extend the present withholding tax rates for 31 days is to afford an opportunity for the House of Representatives to pass the surtax extension within that period of time.

Yesterday, at the luncheon meeting of the majority policy committee, it was voted unanimously to have a 3-month extension of the withholding rates, during which time a full review of reform could be accomplished in an orderly legislative manner.

The full text of the resolution which was adopted by the policy committee is as follows:

Whereas, the Senate Majority Policy Committee, having met and considered the matter of the extension of the income tax surcharge, hereby resolves:

That meaningful tax reforms should be adopted as a means of achieving an equitable national income tax policy, and further resolves,

That any proposal to extend the income tax surcharge be considered simultaneously with recommendations on meaningful tax reform and further resolves,

That the present income tax withholding rates be continued after June 30, 1969 for a period of one quarter to permit full consideration and disposition of the reform and extension of the surtax.

Mr. President, with the passage of this bill today, the Senate is taking no action that is inconsistent with the action of the policy committee yesterday. Because of the timing of the decision arrived at by the policy committee on yesterday, it was not possible to report to the full Democratic caucus the matters which have since developed in the Finance Committee, nor was it possible to report the action taken by the Democratic policy committee yesterday to the distinguished minority leader for his edification and the edification of his colleagues.

It is still the hope of the leadership that prior to the passage of any surtax for another year, meaningful tax reform will be considered simultaneously.

Therefore, if and when the House of Representatives passes the extension of the surtax and the measure arrives in the Senate, it is the Senate's intention to seek, if necessary, a further extension of the withholding rates to permit a full review of meaningful tax reform in an orderly legislative manner by the appropriate Senate committee.

It is noted that the chairman of the Finance Committee, now managing the bill, the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. Long), attended yesterday's meeting of the policy committee and joined in its deliberations. The action about to be taken today is interpreted as totally consistent with the sentiment of those deliberations.

Mr. HARTKE. Mr. President, will the Senator yield to me, because this is the question I was asking?

Mr. MANSFIELD. I yield.

Mr. HARTKE. In other words, so far as the policy committee is concerned, it does not give consent to the extension of the surtax, implied, tacit, or in any fashion whatsoever? All that the policy committee has said, as I understand it, in

substance, is that it is going along with the continuation of the withholding rates at the present level until such time as the Finance Committee can proceed to have hearings, not alone on the surtax, but also on meaningful reform in the field of taxation? Is that correct?

Mr. MANSFIELD. That is correct.

Mr. HARTKE. Coming back to the question about being bound, I want to make it perfectly clear that, I or any other Senator are not bound, as a result of the Senate's action today. If any Senator comes back and says, "Well, we have agreed in substance that the surtax is going to be extended, the only reservation being that there must be meaningful reforms passed with it," that will not be a correct statement of the Senate's action today. I did not want to get into that trap.

Mr. MANSFIELD. No Senator is bound in any way by the passage of this bill. His freedom of action is preserved.