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THE FARM BILL

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I take this time to ask a question about the conference report on the farm bill. As Senators know, there was some discussion late yesterday about action on the conference report. The Senator from Kansas is still hopeful—not very hopeful, but still hopeful—that there may be some action yet today on it, but I take this opportunity to ask a question of the distinguished majority leader because I have read with great interest a statement attributed to the majority leader that it will be the first matter of business on November 16, and also here was some assurance from the majority leader that, without a doubt, the Senate would approve the conference report.

I ask the question now, not in any partisan way, of the Senator from Montana, who comes from a winter wheat producing State, because to his State and to my State of Kansas, which is a winter wheat producing State, this matter is highly important. In fact, I have stated my hope to the Secretary of Agriculture that perhaps, on the basis of assurances on the Senate floor, at least some provisional regulations and recommendations might be made to American winter wheat producers.

Therefore, I would be most grateful if the Senator from Montana would comment on that at this time.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I would be most happy to respond to the distinguished Senator from Kansas, who comes from one of the great wheat-producing States in the Nation, and may I say that Montana is quite a wheat producer, too.

Because of the situation which has developed, I find myself, as the majority leader, in a somewhat embarrassing position. The bill itself is not all that I desired. I thought that the Senate bill was very superior to the House-passed bill. The conference report did not do everything that those of us from the wheat-producing States desired. But, all things considered, it is a good bill, and with a \$1.25 base for wheat, with the rest to be made up through certification, with what has been done to take care of the woolgrowers, the stockmen, the situation relative to Public Law 480, and other factors, it is the kind of bill I will vote for.

Furthermore, I think it should be brought out that both Houses unanimously have passed an extension of the wheat referendum from the 12th of October, last Monday, when it should have taken place, to 30 days after the Congress adjourns sine die, which takes it into January of next year, 1971.

There have been rumors to the effect that certain Senators have approached me with the request that I take no action on the conference report. I wish to state, without equivocation, that no Senator has approached me, on the basis of the reports which have become current, asking me to hold back, to retard, or to delay this conference report; and I want that stated specifically because I have noticed on the ticker that the names of

Senators SYMINGTON and BURDICK have been mentioned.

I have had no contact with them whatsoever with respect to action on this conference report. They have made no request of me. And, as far as I know, they have been ready, able, and willing to be on the floor at any time when the conference report on the farm bill was to be taken up.

There is a situation within the committee itself, and it relates to the highest source in that committee, which I think has to be brought out and understood as to the situation in which the majority leader, and for that matter the Senate, finds itself at the present time.

It appears as of now that we will not get to the conference report on the farm bill today; and, speaking personally, I must express my own disappointment. But if such is the case, I wish to assure the distinguished Senator from Kansas and the Senate that one of the first orders of business when we return on November 16 will be the conference report on the farm bill. And I think I can say with full assurance that the Senate will agree to that conference report. There may be a little debate on it; I would not expect too much. By that time, the ripples will have dissolved, and it is my firm belief that the farmers affected by this bill can go ahead on all fronts with the assurance that the conference report will be considered as soon as possible on or about November 16, the day that we return, and passed as soon as possible thereafter.

May I say that I have no hesitation whatever in making this statement. I have no doubt but that the Senate will overwhelmingly approve the conference report. I have been assured by the distinguished Senator from Kansas that the President will sign the extension resolution having to do with the wheat referendum, very likely today.

So, with that statement, I give to the Senator from Kansas an answer long drawn out, but I hope explicit enough and definite enough to show where the Senator from Montana stands, the position he finds himself in, and what he proposes to do as a result of it.

Mr. DOLE. I appreciate the response of the Senator from Montana, and feel that the assurances given with reference to the action when we return will be helpful, not only to those of us in the Senate and to the Secretary of Agriculture, but most importantly to the farmer.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Yes.

Mr. DOLE. Because even though in many cases—and I assume in Montana—he has planted 80 to 90 percent of his wheat—

Mr. MANSFIELD. Yes, indeed.

Mr. DOLE. There is a set-aside provision in the farm bill, a new provision, and some adjustments may need to be made. But in any event, I also feel that the conference report will be agreed to. It will be adopted, I would suggest, by a very large margin, because I detect no flat, outright opposition to the report.

Many farmers, regardless of the views of some farm leaders, understand that

this may be the last farm bill we will have, because of the question of farm payments and payment limitations. But in any event, there is still some hope; the Senate is still in session, and may be in session for some time yet this afternoon. It is my understanding that at the hour of 2 o'clock, the distinguished minority leader will read a letter from the President of the United States with reference to possible action on the conference report.

So the Senator from Kansas hopes that the matter may yet be resolved; but notwithstanding that, I appreciate very much the statement of the distinguished majority leader, the Senator from Montana, with reference to early action in the event action is not taken today. This assurance, I would hope and would think, would set minds at ease across America, particularly of those farmers who are still waiting to plant. So I appreciate the response very much.

Mr. MANSFIELD. I thank the Senator for his courtesy. I appreciate his comments. I yield to the distinguished Senator from Alabama.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished majority leader for yielding to me. He is to be commended for the very fine, frank, and statesmanlike report that he has given with respect to the conference report on the farm bill.

My primary interest in the farm bill is in how it affects cotton. I was well pleased with the Senate bill, and had hoped that the conferees would agree on the Senate bill.

I do not approve of many of the provisions in the conference report with respect to cotton. I do not like the 28 percent set-aside. I do not like the reduction, in effect, in the support price. I do not like the reduction in the number of acres that are to be planted with support payments.

Yet I feel that the conference report, as inferior as it is to the Senate version of the bill, is a vast improvement over the 1958 act, with its two-price system for cotton, with its bulging warehouses full of cotton on which loans had been made, and with the building up of tremendous surpluses of cotton. So I would much prefer the conference report to getting no farm bill at all, and certainly I shall support the conference report when it is before the Senate for consideration.

The very frank and candid statement of the majority leader with respect to the inevitable eventual passage of the conference committee report would certainly make a tempest in a teapot of the statements that were made of this floor from the other side of the aisle with respect to the dire results of a delay in consideration at this time of the farm bill conference report. I was certainly pleased to hear the distinguished majority leader say that he had not been asked by any Senator to delay consideration of the conference report, because intimations of that sort were made on the Senate floor yesterday.

So it would certainly seem to me that we are going to get a farm bill, and that any farmer who wishes to plant cotton, wheat, or feed grains can do so with full

assurance that his crop will have the support of the Federal Government, according to the formula provided by the conference committee report.

It seems to me that on November 16 or 17, we will, insofar as Congress can act, have a farm bill, and one which is a vast improvement over the 1958 act, through it does not come up to the level of the Senate bill passed recently.

Some days ago, the distinguished majority leader urged the Senate conferees to stick by the Senate bill, and I took the floor and made the same request. Though our pleas were unsuccessful, we do have a farm bill that is on the very threshold of being enacted. It will not be enacted today, but in all likelihood on the 16th or 17th of November it will be enacted. So the country can feel sure that action will be taken by the Senate; and certainly it would be the wish of the junior Senator from Alabama that at that time we have speedy action on the conference report.

I thank the distinguished majority leader for yielding to me.

Mr. MANSFIELD. I thank the distinguished Senator from Alabama, and I assure him that this conference report will have speedy action.