

University of Montana

ScholarWorks at University of Montana

Mike Mansfield Speeches, Statements and Interviews

Mike Mansfield Papers

11-16-1970

Congressional Record S. 18191-2 - Conference Report on Farm Bill

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Mansfield, Mike 1903-2001, "Congressional Record S. 18191-2 - Conference Report on Farm Bill" (1970).

Mike Mansfield Speeches, Statements and Interviews. 928.

https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches/928

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Mike Mansfield Papers at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mike Mansfield Speeches, Statements and Interviews by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON FARM
BILL

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, on October 14, the last day the Senate was in session before the election, in response to questions raised by various Members on both sides of the aisle, I gave assurances that the conference report on the farm bill would be taken up the day the Senate reconvened. I made those assurances in good faith, fully expecting that that would be the case.

Since that time, a number of events have occurred, not the least of which is the absence of the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry on official business. Under his original schedule he was due to arrive in Washington yesterday. His original schedule was changed, however, through no fault of his own and he is now expected back later this week.

Therefore, with the concurrence of the Senate, I would like to be forgiven for the solid assurances I made. I did not foresee some of the events that have made it now impossible to have the Agriculture conference report pending as the very first order of business. Out of deference and courtesy to the chairman of the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, I would like to suggest that the Senate consider taking up the conference report upon his return, which I understand will be Wednesday or Thursday.

I regret having to make a request of this sort in view of the positive statement concerning the scheduling of this matter I made on October 14. However, as sometimes happens, circumstances do develop and in this instance they have colored the picture a little bit differently.

As most of us know, the leadership does not have it totally within its power—and this applies to both leaders—to call up a conference report. Conference reports are privileged matters and under the practice of the Senate they are handled ordinarily by the Senator who manages the measure in question in the first place. In this instance, it is the Senator from Louisiana who assumed that responsibility and I only ask that the Senate and the farmers of the Nation who are so vitally interested in the proposal understand the position in which the leadership finds itself at this moment. It is a difficult position, indeed, and once again I express my apology and ask the indulgence of all concerned for the 2 or 3 day's delay this has occasioned.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that certain excerpts of what I had to say on October 14 be printed at this point in the RECORD.

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, will the Senator yield at that point?

Mr. MANSFIELD. I yield.

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I appreciate the remarks of the Senator from Montana. I think that perhaps the Senator refers to the debate and the colloquy that was had on the last day prior to election

adjournment with the Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MANSFIELD. The Senator is correct.

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, it is my understanding that when the Senator from Louisiana does return this matter will be the first order of business.

Mr. MANSFIELD. The Senator is correct. It is the first order of business.

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, the Senate will not consider the conference report at this time as much as the Senator from Montana and the Senator from Kansas would like to dispose of it today.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I appreciate the understanding remarks of the distinguished Senator from Kansas.

The VICE PRESIDENT. Without objection, it is so ordered.

There being no objection, the excerpts were ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

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 dissipated, 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. This 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.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, the distinguished minority leader has read a letter which he has received from the President of the United States, and it is a good letter; it is not an intemperate letter and in this area, of course, he is expressing the views of the President.

In a colloquy with the distinguished Senator from Kansas earlier, I referred to the highest source on the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry in refuting allegations which have appeared in the press that certain Senators who are running for reelection supposedly had approached me and asked me to delay consideration of the conference report. I denied that allegation unequivocally; there is nothing to it. I have not seen those Senators who are mentioned in the press for well over a week, but the "highest source" I was referring to was the chairman of the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, the distinguished senior Senator from Louisiana, who is highly regarded by Members of this body, whose knowledge of things agricultural is unexcelled, whose probity and integrity are not questioned, and who I think was treated very shabbily during the course of the conference. So that is the "source" of the majority leader's predicament at this time, and he would be the man who would handle the conference report.

With that explanation let me say, Mr. President, because of the element of time and not because of a lack of importance, final action on the conference report on H.R. 18546, the Agricultural Act of 1970, will be impossible prior to the ordered recess this evening. It is not an action by the leadership that prevents the completion of this report today. It was the hope of the Senate leadership to consider and dispose of this measure today but we were unable to do so. The scheduling of conference reports—unlike bills reported from committees—is not within the exclusive jurisdiction of the leadership. We work with the conferees on these matters but the conferees maintain the right to call up a conference report at any time they wish. Although the leadership has been unsuccessful in obtaining agreement for final action prior to the recess tonight, I want to assure farmers and others that this legislation will be the first order of business after recess and that it is my firm belief and expectation that this measure will pass in its present form when considered by the Senate.

Although I am not fully satisfied with every provision of this bill, I believe the farm community needs assurances of the structure of the farm program for planning purposes. I give to the farm community my strong conviction that the bill reported by the conferees will be enacted into law and that the farm community may rely upon its provisions as the basic farm program for the remaining 3 years. However dissatisfied any of the farmers may be with the provisions, or any part of them, it is only realistic to state that these provisions will be the law and actions should be taken by the farmers based upon these provisions.

We have heard references to wheat, feed grains, and cotton in connection with the farm program, but we should keep in mind that other provisions are, and will continue to be, of utmost importance to the farm community and the Nation as a whole. I refer to payment limitations, dairying, extension of Public Law 480, extension of the Wool Act, rural development, including cropland conversion, as well as the so-called greenspan program, and other provisions which would be of special importance to the small farmers.

I want to assure the Senate that it is only the time factor that prevents action prior to recess. The rules of the Senate permit delay very readily. When an adjournment or recess has been ordered, it is very easy

for any Senator to prevent action prior to a deadline. Measures of great controversy can be delayed very easily.

As I said before, the farm bill will be the first order of business when we return; it shall pass the Senate—like the Occupational Health and Safety bill, another controversial measure delayed just this week from consideration during the postelection session. I hope after the election there will be a greater spirit of cooperation so that all important measures can be considered and disposed of one way or the other by the Senate.

Mr. President, I honor the President for the interest he has taken in this most important program, this most significant conference report. I have tried to set the record straight as far as I could, and I want to assure the President that I will do everything I possibly can to see that this matter is the first order of business on our return on the 16th of November.