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Senate

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Almighty God, You have told us in the Scriptures that there are blessings You grant only when we care enough to pray for each other. We also know how our attitudes are changed when we do pray for each other. We listen better and conflicts are resolved. We discover answers to problems together because prayer has made it easier to work out solutions. Also, when we pray for each other, You affirm our mutual caring by releasing supernatural power. Added to this, working together becomes more pleasant and more productive.

Knowing all this, we make a renewed commitment to pray for the people around us, those with whom we disagree politically and those with whom we sometimes find it difficult to work. If we pledge that we are one nation under You, dear God, help us to exemplify to our Nation what it means to be a Senate family, affirming unity in our diversity, held together with the bonds of loyalty to You and our Nation, and drawing on Your power for each other through prayer. In the name of our Lord. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF SENATOR HELMS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able Senator from North Carolina, Senator HELMS, is recognized.

Mr. HELMS. I thank the equally able Presiding Officer.

I ask unanimous consent I be permitted to defer to the distinguished Senator from Texas, after which I shall be recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KEMPTHORNE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If the Senator from Texas will suspend for a moment, under the previous order the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 12:30 p.m. with Senators permitted to speak therein for not to exceed 5 minutes each. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

DISABLED VETERANS

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I am here today to question this administration and the scaring of our veterans in this country. I was in Amarillo, TX, last Saturday and I was talking to a disabled veteran who depends very much on his veterans pension for himself and his family. He said, "Are we going to be paid?" because the news media were saying no.

I said, "Of course you will be paid." There is no way that a veteran's pension is any different from a welfare recipient's stipend or a Medicare part B payment. There is no difference whatsoever. Yet, amazingly to me, the Veterans' Administration is telling people who call that, in fact, veterans benefits will not be paid.

Mr. President, I question a President who says if, in fact, this stalemate continues, which, of course, we hope it will not, but if it does, that he will prioritize the payment of welfare recipients over the payment of our veterans who have served our country. It is unthinkable.

However, just to make sure that this does not happen, I talked to Senator ALAN SIMPSON this morning, who is the chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Com-

mittee. He is going to cosponsor with me—it will be the Simpson-Hutchison bill—a bill that will, in fact, direct this administration to pay veterans benefits. We are going to direct this administration to put veterans in the same category as welfare recipients, Social Security recipients, hospitalization under Medicare recipients, and Medicare part B doctors payments as well. It should not even be a question.

Nevertheless, in order to make sure that this administration cannot play games with the veterans of this country, Senator SIMPSON and I are going to introduce a bill as soon as we can get it written, this afternoon, that will make sure that the veterans of this country will not have to worry if, in fact, this stalemate continues.

I wish the President of the United States would immediately say it is not necessary to pass this kind of law. I hope the President will be able to put out a little release this afternoon that says the veterans do not have to worry. The incoming cashflow is there and the President knows it. The head of the Veterans' Administration knows it. There is no reason to have these scare tactics used on the veterans of our country who have served our country and who deserve to be put in the highest of all categories. And, yet, this President is doing that. I call on him to say our bill, which is being readied right now, is not necessary and the veterans do not have to worry. He can do it with the stroke of a pen or a mere press release.

The priority is set. There is no question. I have consulted every congressional expert, every resource, every historical circumstance that I can find. Veterans have never been threatened. There is no reason for them to be threatened now.

Mr. President, Senator SIMPSON and I are going to introduce this legislation

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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this afternoon. I hope it is not necessary, but we are going to make sure that games will not be played with the veterans of this country. I thank the Senator from North Carolina for yielding me this time for this very important subject.

I just want to say to the veterans of America, we will take care of you. We will make sure that our commitment to you is kept. It is the highest priority that I have.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, first I ask the distinguished Senator from Texas if she and Senator SIMPSON would add my name as a cosponsor.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Certainly.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, will the Senator from North Carolina yield for a moment so I can propound a unanimous consent?

Mr. HELMS. I am sorry, I did not hear.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin is asking if you will yield for a moment so he can offer a unanimous-consent request.

Mr. HELMS. Just so the time is not charged to me.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent I be recognized to speak after the Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. KYL. Reserving the right to object, the Senator from Wisconsin was here before I was, but I would like to add to that request that I be recognized following the Senator from Wisconsin.

Mrs. BOXER. I would like to add to that request that I be allowed to follow the Senator from Arizona and after that the Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, I am going to have to object. Senator FAIRCLOTH is the cosponsor of the bill that I am about to introduce. I think he is entitled to be heard, too.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is objection to the request.

The Senator from North Carolina is recognized for 5 minutes.

MR. HELMS. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. HELMS and Mr. FAIRCLOTH pertaining to the introduction of S. 1413 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Thank you, Mr. President. I ask unanimous consent to be allowed to speak for up to 5 minutes as if in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIONS IN NIGERIA

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, last Friday nine leaders of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People [MOSOP], including renowned playwright Ken Saro-Wiwa, were executed by the brutal Nigerian military regime. The human rights leaders and environmental activists were hanged after a

blatantly unfair trial, and in the face of numerous international appeals to General Abacha to commute the death sentences. That Nigeria carried out these executions during the meeting of the Commonwealth countries in New Zealand, which they attended, is particularly chilling. What a failure of international policy toward Nigeria.

This latest gross human rights violation is convincing evidence that General Abacha, the military leader who seized control of Nigeria in 1993, has no interest in overseeing a 3-year transition to genuine democratic rule as he announced in his notorious October 1 proclamation. Instead, it appears he is seeking to obliterate—by killing—any opposition that could possibly challenge his authority.

The political situation in Nigeria is undoubtedly fragile and difficult. Since its independence from Britain in 1960, Nigeria has been held together by the military, and in fact it has enjoyed civilian rule for only short, punctuated periods in its entire history. Then, as the rest of Africa was sweeping toward democracy, Nigeria too held Presidential elections in 1993. They produced a major sea change in Nigerian politics when a Southern Yoruba, Moshood Abiola, was elected President, after years of domination of the political structure by northern Hausa/Fawlani. It was this shake-up that ultimately precipitated Abacha's takeover of the government in 1994.

Since then, he has ruled the Government with a corrupt hand. While much of Africa is producing good news, Abacha's Nigeria stands in stark contrast. Nigeria's 110 million people live under a totalitarian regime. National and State elected officials have been removed from office, political parties dissolved, newspapers shut down, labor unions disbanded, and thousands detained for their political opinions. This summer he commuted the death sentences of General Obasanjo and others, but his mercy extended only to life imprisonment.

Now Abacha has killed Ken Saro-Wiwa and some of the most well-known human rights and environmental activists, after a flagrantly unfair trial, and despite international pleas to retry the defendants. Some observers have said the executions last week were a function of a domestic military crisis where Abacha had to look strong, lest he face revolt from his own troops. While I could be sympathetic to Abacha's challenge of keeping his country together, this cannot justify nine executions; indeed, such abuse can only lead to further instability in Nigeria.

The environmental and human rights movement for which Ken Saro Wiwa lost his life goes back to 1990, when the first seeds of anger against foreign oil companies began surfacing in Ogoniland. The 6 million Ogonis living among the rich swamps, fertile farmland, and gorgeous rainforests of the Niger River delta has been poor for-

ever. But as oil companies plundered their land, seeking resources, polluting their water, uprooting the soil—leaving the Ogonis with nothing but thousands of ugly oilwells and deteriorated pipelines—the indigenous population began protesting. At first, they were peaceful demonstrations, but then Shell Oil called out the notoriously brutal police force to massacre 80 people and destroy 495 homes. The communities held Shell responsible for choosing to contact the police rather than even to begin to negotiate with them.

That spawned a strong protest movement, and by 1992, when Shell still refused to engage the Ogonis, the police were once again called out, and shot 30 people.

This is when Ken Saro-Wiwa founded the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People. In its constitution, MOSOP called for compensation for loss of their resources to Shell. MOSOP also called for self-determination of Ogoniland, the demand that made Saro-Wiwa threatening to the government.

As the Ogonis were being tortured by arson, beatings, and forced resettlement by the Government, Shell Oil removed itself from responsibility and shoved the issue off as a domestic Nigerian problem, in which it could not engage.

When elections were held in 1993, the Ogonis split their vote: while older more conservative folks favored Abiola, Saro-Wiwa and younger activists supported a boycott of the elections as a farce. With this display of defiance, the Nigerian military government essentially moved into occupy Ogoniland. During a public discussion on whether the Ogonis would send representatives to Abacha's constitutional conference, four Ogoni chiefs were killed.

Saro-Wiwa and eight others were charged with the murder of the chiefs. Many believe Abacha used the deaths as a pretext to eliminate his most outspoken and effective opposition.

A military tribunal was established especially for this trial, a tribunal which, according to State Department and other observers of this case, was neither impartial nor independent. Further, the defendants were not permitted access to a lawyer of their choice, and there is even evidence that witnesses were paid off to testify against Saro-Wiwa. After all this, there was no right of appeal.

Predictably, the defendants were found guilty and sentenced to death. After a flurry of international activity, which included several phone calls and faxes to Nigerian officials from United States Senators, such as myself, which were never answered—the Provisional Ruling Council, headed by Abacha, confirmed the sentences. Once again, we called the U.N. Ambassador, appealed to our administration, wrote letters to Nigeria urging Abacha to commute the