

It's true that radioactive material takes a long time to decay, but the consequences of deforesting a continent are pretty permanent, too. It makes sense to store spent nuclear fuel in the safest place available, rather than leaving it where it is, but trying to plan for thousands of years in the future is wasted energy.

A civilization that maintains our current modest level of technology should have no more difficulty coping with the consequences of using nuclear energy than it does with any other kind. And without that much technology, the human species will have far more serious things to worry about than what its forebears buried deep under a mountain in Nevada.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I thank the Chair. I thank you for the time allotted to me and wish you a good day.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GRASSLEY). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. GRASSLEY addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THOMAS). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 12 minutes as in morning business.

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

THE VOID IN MORAL LEADERSHIP—PART VII

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, the weekend before last, I had the privilege of responding to the President's Saturday radio address.

Some of my colleagues may not have heard my remarks. For their benefit, I would like to paraphrase and expand upon what I said.

A few of my colleagues or their family members have had a brush with violent crime here in our Nation's Capital. Some assaults occurred in the streets nearby the Capitol Grounds, which are patrolled by our own Capitol Hill Police Force. This reinforces to us that, if it can happen here, it can happen anywhere.

Imagine, Mr. President, that you are driving home from work after a busy day in the Senate. All of a sudden, young kids pass you by in their cars. A gunfight breaks out just as they pass. A stray bullet comes crashing through your car window. Suddenly, you are slumped over your steering wheel, dead. You were caught in the crossfire of a senseless gun battle.

Although an unpleasant thought, it is not hard for us in this body to relate to the possibility of such a tragedy happening here in Washington—the murder capital of the country. But a similar tragedy happened just over 3 weeks ago in Des Moines, IA, the capital city of middle America.

The victim's name was Phyllis Davis. She was 42.

Phyllis was driving in Des Moines in broad daylight, on her way home from work. She was suddenly the victim of a gunfight between two gangs of kids. A stray bullet lodged in her body and killed her. These punks had no regard for her innocent life, let alone their own.

This tragedy stunned Des Moines. It drove home two points:

First, you cannot hide from crime, nowadays. No one and no place is safe. It could be you next, or someone you love. And second, dangerous criminals are getting younger and younger. Respect for life and property is diminishing earlier in the lives of our citizens.

The obvious question is, Why? Why is it that there is no place to hide from crime? Why is it that perpetrators of violent crimes are getting younger and younger?

Much of the reason, I have observed, is this:

We have created a culture in our society that coddles the criminal. We talk the tough talk, we throw money and resources at the problem, we throw 30,000 cops on the street. After we've done all that, what do we get? Violent criminals are getting younger and younger, and the violence can happen to you or your loved ones anywhere, anytime.

A culture that coddles the criminal, Mr. President. That is what we have got. In plain terms, we have got a bad criminal justice system. It is upside down. It seems that criminals have more rights than victims. We handcuff justice instead of crime. How can this happen in America.

One reason younger people are committing more crimes may be that word's getting out that the system will be easy on them.

Juveniles now account for nearly 20 percent of all violent crime arrests. If the trend continues, that figure will double in 15 years. This is outrageous.

When tragedies occur like what happened to Phyllis Davis, communities pull together to respond. But they get hamstrung. The system undercuts them: Too many bad laws; too many soft-on-crime judges; not enough moral leadership.

That is the problem, Mr. President. That is what causes the culture of coddling criminals. First, liberal judges let dangerous offenders back on the streets; second, the Clinton Justice Department has frustrated efforts to enforce the death penalty. And more often than any previous administration, the Department intervenes in cases on the side of convicted criminals.

Third, our leaders in the White House have abandoned the bully pulpit in the war on drugs. In the absence of moral leadership, drug use among America's youth is up dramatically. In fact, there has been a 52-percent increase in drug use by teenagers since President Clinton took office.

Republicans have waged a long battle against a legal system that coddles

criminals. Instead, this Republican Congress has done much to strengthen the criminal justice system on behalf of victims instead. We passed major reforms, clamping down on frivolous prisoner lawsuits. This was in the budget bill signed 2 weeks ago. One result is that prisons will again be more like prisons, and less like Marriott Hotels.

And the antiterrorism bill signed 2 weeks ago will make it easier to deport criminal aliens. It also provides effective death penalty measures, for a change. This is a provision President Clinton initially opposed and worked against. But he was finally forced to accept it. His lieutenants went kicking and screaming.

Mr. President, this was the gist of my comments in response to the President's Saturday address. Following my remarks, the White House responded in turn. I will now address the White House response to me.

The Associated Press quoted a White House deputy press secretary, Ginny Terzano, as saying the following:

The President has fought long and hard to get a tough crime bill and to place 100,000 more police officers on the streets.

Mr. President, the problem is a culture of coddling criminals. How does this statement by the White House reassure the American people? How does it reassure them that they won't be next to get caught in the crossfire of a senseless gun battle, or some equally senseless, violent act?

For one thing, the Clinton administration worked to soften the crime bill, not make it tough. Remember? It was larded up with social programs to coddle the criminal. Remember midnight basketball? Second, more cops on the street is only part of the solution. What good do more cops do if the system keeps handcuffing the cops instead of the bad guys? You just have more cops with handcuffs on them. That is all.

Meanwhile, yesterday's Washington Post had a story showing that the number of Federal criminal cases in this administration have not gone up. This, despite billings of dollars of increases in funding for the FBI, DEA, and U.S. attorneys.

The article also suggests that the caseload has lacked effective management within the law enforcement community. You can put all the cops you want in the streets. But if criminals are not being prosecuted and kept in jail, how effective is your crimefighting?

What the President should be doing is addressing the real, underlying cause of crime. He needs to attack the culture that coddles criminals. For starters, he could get a solicitor general who intervenes in cases on the side of victims, rather than using technicalities to help out convicted criminals. President Clinton's solicitor did this in United States versus Davis and again in Cheely versus United States, to cite just two examples.

Second, he should pick judges that do not let criminals back on the streets who should not be there;

Third, he should crack the whip with his Justice Department and find out why large budget increases for the FBI, DEA, and U.S. attorneys have not produced more criminal prosecutions.

Fourth, and most important, he should use the bully pulpit of the White House to show moral authority in the war on drugs.

Mr. President, this last point is the most crucial of all. So much of crime—especially violent crime—is a function of drug use and trafficking. Yet, the President has been silent on the drug issue until recently. He has said more about drugs the last 2 months than he did the last 3 years. It is a coincidence, I am sure, that this is an election year.

But when you look behind the rhetoric, and look instead at the record, the President has a lot of explaining to do. Why has the number of high school seniors using drugs frequently increased by 52 percent since this President took office? Why did he cut the drug office staff by 83 percent, and decimate its budget?

I would argue it is because he abandoned the bully pulpit. He declared a time-out in the war on drugs while the bad guys kept on playing. In short, he created a void in moral leadership on this issue.

And now, all the progress we made during the 1980's in fighting drug use are being reversed. It is just mind-boggling.

When it comes to fighting crime, the President seems to be playing in the wrong arena. He is not playing in the same arena that he talks about. People are out there driving in their cars, wondering if they could be next. And the moral leadership on this issue that the People are looking for from their leader in Washington is absent.

In my view, Congress will have to continue playing the lead role in turning our criminal justice system right-side up. We need to protect the victims of crime once again, instead of coddling criminals.

We could build a strong partnership in this effort, if only the President would joint us. Until then, this Congress will continue to battle the system that handcuffs justice rather than crime.

Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, I request that I be allowed to proceed in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

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

GAS TAX REPEAL A MISTAKE

Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, I rise to address the majority leader's announced intention to introduce legislation that would repeal the 4.3-cents-a-gallon tax on gasoline that this body passed as part of the 1993 budget bill. I have a very high personal and professional regard for our majority leader

and I am certainly not unmindful of the political season that is upon us. Repealing a tax—any tax—and particularly a tax consumers are reminded of every time they fill up their cars at the pump, is unarguably attractive as a matter of raw politics, but it is terrible as a matter of public policy. Just when we are beginning to make sustained progress on bringing down the deficit, just when we are within reach of actually balancing the budget in 7 years and making a serious and principled commitment to real fiscal responsibility, we blink. We cannot take the political heat. On something this important to our Nation and our children's future, if we take the heat we ought to take President Truman's advice and get out of the kitchen.

We talk about a market economy, but we won't let the market work. The Federal Government has an important role to play in our lives, but it cannot and should not attempt to solve every problem we confront—particularly when to save the average motorist \$27 per year we move in precisely the wrong direction on the more important challenges of energy independence, national security, and fiscal responsibility—and send the wrong signals to our allies and others around the world about whether we are serious.

I hope a majority of our colleagues will have the political courage to resist what will undoubtedly be an extremely popular bill. If we do not, that the President will be willing to demonstrate the intestinal fortitude we lack—as he did in proposing the tax in the first place.

In my view, a \$30 billion tax repeal shouldn't even be considered in the absence of meaningful action on our long-term budget problems. The 1993 deficit reduction package, which contained this modest gas tax, and had no support on the other side of the aisle, has made a substantial dent in our annual deficits, making balance in 7 years possible. In the absence of that deficit reduction effort, we probably would not be discussing seriously the idea of actually reaching balance in such a relatively short period.

Even with that 1993 effort, however, trying to reach balance has been a monumental task. A number of us in the bipartisan group of Senators referred to as the Centrist Coalition have been working for months to find a balanced budget compromise, and a repeal of the 4.3-cents-a-gallon tax will only complicate our efforts to balance the Federal budget by sometime early in the next century.

Not only would the repeal move us in the wrong direction as far as balancing the budget is concerned, it would not solve the problem of higher gasoline prices. If the energy companies are culpable, I have no desire to take them off the hook, but prices have been rising because the demand for fuel has been rising while production has fallen short of this need. Quite simply, the evidence suggests that demand is rising as

Americans are driving further, at higher speeds, in less fuel efficient vehicles. Supplies have been curtailed because of a longer winter that kept refiners producing heating oil longer than expected and delayed their shift to gasoline, and fuel inventories were also allowed to remain low because of an anticipated release of oil from Iraq that has not come to pass.

Mr. President, the fact of the matter is that the recent price increases are not due to a 4.3-cents-a-gallon tax increase that was put into law 3 years ago. That 4.3-cents-a-gallon is no more responsible for the recent increase in gas prices than it was responsible for the low gasoline prices we have enjoyed for the previous 2 years when the measure was also in effect.

If we take the oil companies at their word that recent gas prices are the result of demand outstripping supply, then the last thing that we should be considering is a repeal of the 4.3-cents-a-gallon tax, further pushing up demand. For those of us who believe that a higher gasoline tax is a necessary element of sound public policy because it encourages conservation and reduces our dependence on foreign oil, a repeal of this tax would be totally inappropriate.

Mr. President, I was one of several colleagues recently recognized by the Concord Coalition as being willing to make the tough choices, and I intend to continue making them, despite the political downside. I fully understand that rejecting politically popular tax cuts in an election year represents a tough choice for legislators, even if this tax repeal would involve less than \$30 a year for the average motorist. But if there is a good public policy reason for the tax in the first place and a repeal will not be likely to dramatically affect the perceived problem, it should not be that tough a choice. For these reasons, I would encourage my colleagues to join me in opposing the proposed repeal of the 4.3-cents-a-gallon tax on gasoline.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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 3 p.m. with Senators permitted to speak therein for not to exceed 5 minutes each.

The Democratic leader, Mr. DASCHLE, or his designee, is recognized to speak for up to 90 minutes, and the Senator from Georgia, Mr. COVERDELL, or his designee, is recognized to speak for up to 90 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the Senator from Georgia.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, my understanding is that my designated time began, or should have begun at 1:30. I am going to ask unanimous consent that my designated time begin at 1:42 in order to accommodate my colleague who wishes to make a brief statement.