

and produced it so cheap that it can be sold in competition with the cheap labor of Europe—so cheap, indeed, that no country can make it to compete with him. I refer to Henry Ford. He has produced twelve hundred thousand automobiles a year—eight a minute—has financed his whole business from the profits, and has become the richest man in the world. And the minimum wage he pays is so high that if it were proposed in Massachusetts, those who advocated it would be set down as crazy. Even at his high minimum wage, he has been able to employ the lame, the crippled, the blind of the community not as a charity but at a profit. The statistics in his autobiography covering these facts are amazing. The demonstration of the possibility of the minimum wage speaks louder than my words and I hope it may be borne in mind in any decision of the minimum wage question.

This was September 1923, by Edward Filene, a businessman of some significance, then. I wanted to share this, which I think is a wonderful piece about the minimum wage written some 70 years ago, but I think it is still relevant today with respect to the questions that we face.

FAMILIES-FIRST AGENDA

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about the agenda. We discussed it some yesterday. I want to discuss it additionally today. Senator REID, from Nevada, and myself were asked by the Democratic leader to begin work with our caucus to develop an agenda. It is easy to discern quickly in this Chamber what someone stands against, what someone opposes, what a party opposes. That takes very little skill, to oppose anything. It takes very little skill to be negative. So the political system and the give-and-take of politics has those who are proposing things and those who are opposing them.

Again, it is easy to discern quickly who opposes what. The question, however, for us in our country, is not what do we oppose; the question is, really, what do we support? What is it that we believe can be done to advance the interests of this country?

As I indicated yesterday, the standard by which we ought to judge that is, at the end of the day, have we done things in this country, in the public and private sector, to increase the standard of living in America? Do we have people who have an opportunity for better jobs at better pay? Are their children going to better schools? Are we driving on better roads? Are we able to acquire better products?

The most important ingredient in all of that, the thing that is the linchpin of opportunity, is: Do we have an economy that is growing? Do we have an economy that is producing new jobs and is capable of producing new jobs at a decent income at a sufficient pace to keep abreast of the increase in population and to keep the American people understanding there is an opportunity and hope ahead?

As I begin discussing the families-first agenda that we have put together,

let me say the first and most important element of what we stand for as Democrats is economic opportunity and economic growth. It is the legacy of the Democratic Party. We have been the party that pushes insistently to expand this country's economy and therefore expand opportunities, not just for some, but for all in America.

I must say, my own view of the current economic situation is, while this administration has done a remarkable job in a range of areas, it has not had the kind of cooperation I would like to see from those who construct monetary policy at the Federal Reserve Board. It certainly has not seen much cooperation from Wall Street.

We have, it seems to me, an economic strategy, especially in the area of monetary policy, that shortchanges our country today. As Mr. Rohaytn from New York says, the minute you get some prevailing wind, we see a Federal Reserve Board decide to drop anchor.

It makes no sense to create a false choice, saying we must choose between either inflation or growth. It makes no sense to believe if we have decent growth that provides decent expansion and therefore more jobs at better income, that we will necessarily stoke the fires of inflation. That is nonsense. Inflation is down. It has been coming down 5 years in a row. If you believe Mr. Greenspan, that the CPI overstates inflation by a percent and a half, then you have to conclude there is almost no inflation in America today. If that is the case, why do we see this rate of economic growth targeted at an artificially low rate, which means the false choice is answered, by those who provide answers, that we will continue to fight an inflation that does not exist? The cost of fighting that inflation will be lost opportunity for American families and lost jobs and a less bright economic future.

I am going to talk about the families-first agenda, but I will come to the floor and talk about this at some length. Last week, what did we see? We saw a news report at the end of last week that said unemployment is going down again, unemployment has dropped. What did Wall Street do? What did the bond market do? What did the stock market do? It had an apoplectic seizure. Good economic news for Wall Street means bad times.

What on Earth is going on? Is there a cultural divide here somewhere, that good economic news, good news for American families, creates seizures on Wall Street? Do they not connect with this country at all? Dropping unemployment is good news. When unemployment goes down, you would expect people on Wall Street to celebrate a bit. When economic growth rates are up, you would expect Wall Street to believe that is good for our country.

Get a life, would you, in New York City. Get a life about these things. Why is it every time we get a piece of good news, the folks on Wall Street have a seizure? Why is there a chasm

between Wall Street and Main Street about what Wall Street believes is a fundamentally unsound policy for them? I want to come and speak about that at some length, because it seems to me this is out of step with what we need for our country in terms of economic growth and opportunity. If every time we begin to see some progress in creating the kind of economic growth we need, not 2.2 percent a year, not 2.5 percent a year, but more robust economic growth that produces the jobs and opportunity—if every time that happens we see the bond market go into a pretzel stance and have a seizure of some sort, there is something fundamentally wrong with what is going on in this country. But if the first obligation and the first important fight for us as Democrats is to create an economy that expands and grows and provides opportunities for working families, we have a range of other policies that we believe are important that help accomplish that.

We put together, with the help of a lot of people over a period of a year in the Senate and then working together with Members of the U.S. House, and then with the White House, an agenda that is called "families-first." It is called families-first because, when everything is settled, when all the dust begins to settle and the day is done, the question of whether we have been successful as a country is measured by whether we have done something that improves the lives of American families. Have we increased the standard of living in this country?

First, we believe, in a families-first agenda that there is a responsibility for Government. Government has a responsibility to balance the budget, pay for what it consumes, not leave a legacy for its grandchildren to pay for what their grandparents consume.

There is a right way and a wrong way to balance the budget. We believe the budget ought to be balanced with hard choices, the right way. The budget deficit has come down very, very substantially in the last 3 years, and that is because a lot of folks in this Chamber have been willing to make tough decisions. We would reach out and hope for cooperation with others, to say, yes, balancing the budget matters, and it is one of the first items on our agenda.

Second, economic opportunity: We stand for helping small businesses thrive and create jobs in our country, and pursue policies to make that happen. People who risk their economic livelihood, go to work in the morning, keep their businesses open all day, and who are trying to make a profit, they matter to this country. They provide jobs in this country. And we want policies that are friendly to that kind of investment and that kind of commitment that Americans make in creating jobs and building businesses.

Investing in our communities, in the infrastructure, building the roads, building the infrastructure this country needs, repairing the infrastructure,

building schools, those are the kinds of things that need to have attention as well, and that is in our families-first agenda.

We talk about individual responsibility: welfare reform. Senator BREAUX will speak this morning, and no one has worked harder or longer on welfare reform than the Senator from Louisiana. Our approach has been called work first. We believe those who are able-bodied have a responsibility to work. We want to put them from the welfare rolls over to the payrolls.

We also believe that deadbeat dads ought to take responsibility and pay for the care of their children. Why should the dads out there have children and then abandon them and then say to the other taxpayers of America, "You take care of those kids." Our proposal says to deadbeat dads, "It is your responsibility as well to take care of those kids."

Our agenda calls for a national crusade to end teenage pregnancy in this country, which causes a whole series of other social problems. That is something Americans could and should unite against and decide, in a massive education program, that teenage pregnancy retards, rather than advances, the interests of this country.

Personal security. It is hard to feel like your country is advancing if you and your family do not feel safe. We believe putting more cops on the street is good public policy, and President Clinton's proposal is now in effect and there are more cops on the street, more police on the beat. We would continue to enhance that.

Keeping kids out of the streets and out of gangs and a whole series of policy initiatives to do that are important.

Cleaning drugs out of our schools is important. We believe that everyone on parole and probation in America ought to be drug tested while on parole and probation.

We propose in the families-first agenda retirement security, pension reform and protection, allowing people to take their pensions with them when they change jobs, stiffer penalties for those who abuse the pensions and crack down on companies who use pension money inappropriately, money people have saved for their retirement that the companies would then misuse. There would be tough penalties in those circumstances.

We would expand pension coverage, including expanding opportunities for IRA investments.

Health care security. The Kennedy-Kassebaum bill, which we have now passed 100 to 0 in the Senate but is not now law, is a central part of what we ought to do. And a kids first health plan which we believe ought to be advanced.

Educational opportunity. Our party has always stood for education: \$10,000 tax deductions for college and job training and a Project Hope scholarship project, 2 years of college for kids with good grades.

Mr. President, the families-first agenda is an approach that talks about the requirements of all levels of government and all Americans to join together to do the things, the sensible things, that will make this a better country.

We are not talking about spending substantial amounts of new money. That is not what these programs are about. These programs are about trying to determine how we advance this country's interests so that at the end of the day, the American people can say our country is growing, it is moving, it is providing hope and opportunity for our family and, yes, for every family. That is what the families-first agenda is about.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and yield to my colleague from Louisiana, if he is ready to speak.

Mr. BREAUX addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. BREAUX. I thank the Chair. Mr. President, I will start by congratulating the Senator from North Dakota for his comments in outlining what I think is a realistic and doable agenda; that is, the families-first agenda. I think that we as Democratic Members can be very proud of putting forth an agenda that is realistic, it is doable, it is not slogans, it is not pie in the sky, it is not sound bites, it is not ideas that have been proposed by public relations firms after doing polling when they look forward to concentrating on the next election, as opposed to trying to look at the real needs of real Americans in the real world.

I think the families-first agenda is, in fact, an agenda that talks about real problems and coming up with real solutions that are achievable, because while we can talk about slogans and goals, our business in this body is to legislate in a way that has a real effect on people.

I think that some of the early statements we have had in this Congress about things that should be done have been received by many people with a great deal of concern as to whether they are really ever going to happen. As we move to the end of this Congress, I think a lot of Americans have said, "Well, you know, I heard about contracts and I heard about proposals to amend the Constitution and to do all types of things, and it never happened." The reason it never happened is because they were unrealistic goals in the first place.

What we have to deal with is what is doable, what is accomplishable and how to take those step-by-step efforts to reach the goals that people expect us to achieve. That is why I think the agenda that the distinguished Senator from North Dakota has outlined is one that is realistic. It is one that the average family, when they sit around the dinner table at night talking about their concerns and what they would like to see happen, are items they talk about: security, a reasonable paycheck,

reasonable health insurance, a reasonable opportunity to send their children to college.

They are not talking about philosophical ideas. They are not talking about major amendments to the Constitution, which has served us very well for over 200 years. They are talking about real-life problems that they face every day, and they just wish that Congress could work together in getting some of these things done.

I think progress is being made. The minimum wage legislation that was passed, I think, was very positive. We continue to work on the so-called Kennedy-Kassebaum health care program, which would be a major accomplishment and one that I think is very doable.

I am pleased to say that I think we can get something done on that legislation in this Congress. We are very, very close and optimistic about it. It is going to take some compromise on both sides, but I think the end result will be much better in having something done than it will be in not accomplishing it and just blaming the other side for failure, which we do far too often around here.

I would like to concentrate on one of the items that is part of the families-first agenda, and that is real welfare reform. One of the problems, I think, that has prevented us from accomplishing it so far is the insistence by many on the Republican side of trying to put together a piece of legislation that we basically are close to agreeing on, welfare reform, and tying it to something we do not agree on, and that is Medicaid. By doing so, we guarantee that nothing will happen on either one of the two bills, as far as getting something adopted.

I was encouraged to see this morning in Commerce Daily the fact that there has been what is reported as a general consensus by House Republicans to push ahead on welfare reform by itself. I think that is something that our colleagues in the Senate should also consider.

If we are very close to reaching an agreement on one major reform of an entitlement program, why not go ahead and accomplish it, why not go ahead and do it, why not give the American people a real welfare reform package that we all can say we joined hands and came up with an agreement that makes sense?

There are some, I think a diminishing minority, who say, "No, we're going to have to tie welfare reform to Medicaid reform." Why? I do not know. Perhaps some want to do that just so they will have the President veto it and then have a political issue.

But I do not think there is a great deal more to be gained by blaming each other for our failures. I think most people in this country outside of Washington would like to see both sides work together and do what we can agree on, set aside what we cannot agree on for later debates and later

work, even into the next Congress, if necessary.

So I think that the suggestion by House Republicans in growing numbers and apparently being discussed by a number of Republican Senators on this side to do what we can do, that being welfare reform, and doing it separately makes a great deal of sense. I am absolutely convinced that if we are able to come to the Senate floor on a welfare reform package, that we can reach an agreement. I think we are very, very close, and I think that is something that clearly should be done.

We all know that Government cannot provide all the solutions to all of our problems all of the time. That is why I think that the consensus that is developed on welfare reform makes so much sense. We all agree that welfare reform requires work. The goal of welfare reform should be getting people off welfare. The goal of welfare reform should be ending welfare and putting people into jobs in the private sector and, when necessary, with some Government help and assistance.

First of all, we can all agree that real welfare reform is about work. We also, I think, all agree that welfare cannot be forever, that there has to be a time limit, there has to be a termination. I think we all understand that, if people think there is no end to what they may be receiving, in fact there will not be the incentives to move into the private sector in the work programs.

So, first, I think welfare has to have time limits. It has to be about work. But it also has to be, Mr. President, about protecting innocent children. I do not think there is anyone in this body who would say that we want to be so tough on work that we adversely affect innocent children who did not ask to be brought into this world. They are here in many cases as innocent victims. We ought to make sure that any reform also protects children while it is very tough on work requirements and very tough on the parents.

So I think we have a consensus that is right here. It is right at our fingertips. And there is no reason why we should not go ahead and do what is doable and what we can accomplish and then we can all take credit for it politically. This is an election year. I think that when we go back home and say that together Republicans and Democrats have worked out a plan to end welfare as we know it, the American people will say, "Thank goodness. They have gotten something accomplished."

I think there is a great deal of agreement on how to go about doing it. It is not total agreement. There are still major items that need to be worked out. But I think that it is very clear that we can accomplish this. I think every indication is that the President wants to sign a welfare reform bill but knows that the current Medicaid plan is not yet ready.

We have Republican Governors who just, apparently, yesterday, in talking with their Republican Senate col-

leagues, talked about the fact that they are very displeased with the Medicaid plan that has come out of the Senate Finance Committee, on which I serve. So if you have Democratic Governors saying, "Look, I don't think this is ready yet. We don't like it," and you have Republican Governors who have to run the program saying, "No, we don't think this product is what we want," that sends us a message. Let us set that aside, continue to work on it, but go forward with that which we can agree on. And that means the welfare plan.

I think, if we were able to separate it, we could get that accomplished. If we tie them together, we are dooming welfare reform to defeat. Maybe some people think that is a good idea politically because then we can blame the other side. They will blame us and everybody will blame each other. The American public outside Washington will say, "What are they talking about? They should be talking about getting something done, not blaming the other side for failure." Failure is not politically acceptable in the area that I come from. I think we do much better when we get something accomplished.

The Work First Act that we have, as Democrats, offered as part of this package, I think, is a major step in the right direction. Can it be further improved? Probably. I am willing to work in that regard. But I think it makes some principal points that I think are the essence of real reform. Assistance is conditional. It is not really an entitlement. People have to be able to move into the work force or perform community service. That is real reform. It is limited. There is an actual time limit on how long a person or their family can be on welfare. The general consensus is that 5 years is an acceptable amount over a lifetime. We know it cannot be forever, and our bill says that.

It requires teen parents—which is a major problem—to live at home or live in an adult setting. Children who are having children cannot be left on their own without adult supervision. Our legislation requires a teen parent to live at home and to attend school as a condition to receiving welfare benefits. But we also say that to the innocent child, and many of them are babies out there, that we are going to guarantee that there be child care and health care for those children.

I want to be as tough as I possibly can on the parent because they are the ones who brought the child into the world. They have a responsibility. They have to live up to it. But there are the innocent children that we, as a society, have to say we are going to reach out to and make sure they are given child care so the parent can go to work and they are going to have health care so they can remain healthy and growing children.

We also want to make sure that at times when there is a recession they

are not left high and dry, that funding will be available for child care and for health care. We want to give the States all the flexibility they need. What works in my State of Louisiana may not be acceptable in California or New York or Florida or any of the other States. What they do in their States may not fit my State. So we want to give the Governors in the States a tremendous amount of flexibility.

I think the bottom line in all of this is that we have a program that can change the welfare system in our country to bring about real reform and at the same time save a great deal of money. Our plan is projected to save nearly \$50 billion. That is real reform. At the same time, it protects the needs of innocent children. So we have a good program.

So I urge today that as part of the family-first agenda that we have put out on the table—one ingredient is the welfare reform package—but my plea to our colleagues is to not let other issues doom welfare reform to defeat, do not tie welfare to things that we do not have an agreement on. I think that would be a very, very serious mistake.

I think our Finance Committee has done some good work, quite frankly, in a bipartisan fashion. The chairman of the committee, Senator ROTH, was able to work with those of us on the Democratic side to add some amendments to the package that make it a better package, one that is more acceptable to the administration and one that can actually become law with a few additional minor changes.

But the only way we can fail in this effort is to desire failure. I think, unfortunately, there are some in the Congress who would like to see that happen. I suggest that that is not the way to go. So let us get on with what we can accomplish, do what we can do, and then I think the American public will be able to say that Congress had the opportunity to do what was right, met that challenge, and did exactly that in welfare reform, a good place to start. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for 10 minutes in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. COVERDELL. I reserve the right to object. Parliamentary inquiry. It is my understanding that at 9:40—no objection.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, is it all right to proceed?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized for 10 minutes.

MINIMUM WAGE AND HEALTH INSURANCE LEGISLATION

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. I think our business is relatively easy here, or ought to be. I really think there are