

DISASTER IN THE DAKOTAS

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I came to the floor to visit about a very important issue, the issue of the chemical weapons treaty and the requirement the Senate vote on that treaty. But before I do that, I want to tell my colleagues of a circumstance that exists in our part of the country that they have no doubt seen and heard on the television and radio and that is the worst blizzard we have seen in some 50 years in North Dakota on top of a flooding condition that was already existing that looks to be a 100-year flood.

Last evening, I and my colleagues from North and South Dakota went to see President Clinton in the White House along with the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to discuss the emergency that exists in our part of the country.

The President has made a disaster declaration. He has signed it. There is now a team of people from FEMA in the Dakotas beginning to work, beginning to marshal equipment from around the country—generators, snow removal equipment, and a whole range of things that will be necessary to deal with this crisis.

I want to tell my colleagues of the kind of crisis that exists. Again, we had a blizzard that in many parts of North Dakota gave us 15, 18, and 20 inches of snowfall on top of a circumstance that already existed that would have provided us and will provide us with a flood that is a 100-year event. So this is an enormously difficult time for North Dakotans. We have had the spectacle of people actually sandbagging in the middle of a blizzard, which is a very unusual event. Normally you fight a flood or normally you fight to survive a blizzard, but we have had the confluence of two events that is enormously difficult. We have substantial livestock death. We have reports of people missing entire livestock herds. The stories of people helping one another in coping this past weekend are compelling and gripping, of courage, neighbor helping neighbor. It is a very tough time in the Dakotas.

My colleagues and I will likely be going back out—we just came back—with the senior team which the President will send. He intends James Lee Witt and I believe at least one other Cabinet Secretary and some others as part of a senior team from the administration to go out and to survey the damage and to begin the active work of supervising the people who are already on the ground.

This is as tough a time as anything I have ever seen in the Dakotas. Most North Dakotans tell me it is the toughest winter they have ever seen. The blizzard this weekend, as I indicated, is the toughest we have had in 50 years in North Dakota, and it came on top of five or six successive blizzards in North Dakota that essentially shut down our State on five or six occasions previously. As of Saturday evening, this past Saturday evening, in North Da-

kota traffic was stopped in virtually every direction on every road. It was a very difficult time and remains a very difficult time with thousands of North Dakotans still without electricity after many days. This is a crisis which will continue to exist because of the flooding which has not yet crested in many parts, especially of the Red River.

I thank President Clinton; I thank James Lee Witt, the head of FEMA; I thank our colleagues, Republicans and Democrats, who join together in times like this to extend a helping hand to people who need help and who are fighting their way through a crisis that is very difficult to deal with.

THE BUDGET

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I would like to mention two additional items very quickly. One is an issue that has just been discussed at some length on the floor about a budget and tax relief. My hope is that we will find a way to have a bipartisan compromise on a budget. The law requires that by April 15 a budget be enacted by this Congress. It is clear now that the Congress will miss that date. But the date is less important than the result. The result ought to be a budget that achieves balance so we are not spending our children's money, often on things we do not need.

We ought to decide that there is as much energy in this Chamber to balance the budget as there was to change the Constitution of the United States. I said during the debate on the constitutional provision that was offered here that you could change the Constitution now, and 2 minutes from now you would not have altered the deficit by one penny. What will alter the budget deficit and eventually eliminate the budget deficit will be individual spending and taxing decisions inside the budget by Members of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House. I think it is past the time in which the President and Members of Congress, Republicans and Democrats, join together to say here is where we ought to head and here is the road map by which we get there, to establish balance.

I have cast hard votes and tough votes. In 1993 I cast an awfully tough vote. We have reduced the budget deficit by 60 percent in the last 4 years. If we continue down that road, we can eliminate the Federal budget deficit, and we should. I am willing to cast more tough votes, and I hope very much we can decide this is not a partisan issue but rather a shared issue for Republicans and Democrats who decide that there is merit and virtue in balancing this Federal budget and not charging what we are now spending to our kids and grandkids.

CHEMICAL WEAPONS TREATY

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I came to the floor to speak about another issue that is very important this week

as well. This week the Senate comes back from a 2-week break and turns to the question of nuclear waste. That is an important issue and one I hope this Congress and the President will address seriously and solve. But there is another issue that is very important that has a deadline that we must address, and that is the issue of the chemical weapons treaty.

We now have a circumstance in which this country, with 160 other countries, has signed a convention in which a chemical weapons treaty to the Geneva Disarmament Conference in 1994 was negotiated and completed. It was initiated by President Bush, supported by President Reagan, it was continued under President Clinton and submitted to the U.S. Senate for ratification.

The chemical weapons treaty will restrain the proliferation and will reduce the threat of the use of chemical weapons in our lifetime. It is the first ever treaty to try to ban an entire class of weapons of mass destruction. Never again should men and women in our lifetime face a weapon of mass destruction called a chemical weapon or poison gas. We have a treaty that has now been signed by 70 nations, more than the 65 that is needed to ratify the treaty, so it will go into effect on April 29 of this year. This country has not yet ratified it. Our key allies, Australia, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, and others, have already ratified this treaty, and we need to do so and we need to do so by April 29.

There are opponents of this who say, "No, this is not a perfect treaty." And it is not. Opponents say, "If we adopt this treaty, Saddam Hussein is not going to adopt the treaty, so what are we doing here?" Because some will commit murder, do we not want to make murder a crime in America? We understand there are some who may not want to abide by this treaty. This country has already made a decision, in the mid-1980's, that we are going to destroy our stockpile of chemical weapons. We have already made that decision. We made a decision under President Bush and continued it under President Clinton to negotiate a chemical weapons treaty. That treaty was negotiated. Seventy nations have now ratified it, and we have not yet done so, and we should. Ratifying it will strengthen this country, not weaken this country. Those who allege that ratifying the chemical weapons treaty will somehow weaken this country's hand, in my judgment, are wrong. I respect their opinion, but they are wrong. It is urgent and necessary that we, by April 29, ratify this treaty. We are able, with our allies, to provide leadership to destroy an entire class of weapons of mass destruction in our society. If we do not take this opportunity to do it, we will have made a very grave mistake.

I was not here when we were testing nuclear weapons in massive quantity, but I know when it was proposed that

we cease testing nuclear weapons and have a test ban on nuclear weapons, there were some who stood up and said we cannot do that because it will weaken our country. Yet we had a ban on testing nuclear weapons, and it was the right thing to do. History tells us it was the right thing to do.

This is the right thing to do as well. It is very important that we understand this must be part of the Senate's business this month. If we do not take the opportunity to provide leadership in banning the use of chemical weapons, a weapon of mass destruction in our society, if we do not take the opportunity to establish that leadership, we will have made a very grave error.

This is not a case of one side of a debate being soft headed and fuzzy and the other side being the real prodefense folks. The people who support this—former National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft, former Secretaries of State James Baker, Larry Eagleburger, former Arms Control and Disarmament Agency head Ron Lehman—all urge the Senate to ratify the chemical weapons treaty, none of whom can be alleged to have been soft on defense issues. These are people very prodefense, people who are very concerned about making certain that we do not lose advantage, that we are a strong country, that we can defend ourselves. But these are people who also believe, as did President Bush, that this treaty makes sense for our country, to provide leadership on the abolition of chemical weapons. Leadership on the abolition of poison gas as a weapon in war makes great sense for our country and great sense for humanity.

The reason I raise the question today is this. We have a limited time, and a deadline of April 29, to ratify this treaty in order for us to be part of the regime that begins to develop the methods by which this treaty is enforced. Yet, we have no agreement even to bring the treaty to the floor of the Senate for a vote or discussion. Some of us believe very strongly that, with the exception of the emergency supplemental appropriations bill, for example, or with the exception, perhaps, of a budget bill to balance the Federal budget—which we should do—with the exception of those things we ought to make sure this is first in line. Until we have assurance this is first in line, we ought not be doing other business. This ought to be brought to the floor of the Senate, and we ought to have agreement to do that soon.

I hope we will have an aggressive and significant discussion about this treaty. My understanding is the distinguished Senator from Oklahoma may intend to speak some about this treaty and some of his concerns about it. But my hope is, perhaps this afternoon—I intend to come back to the floor—some of us can have a discussion back and forth. I have great respect for people who take an opposite view on this and on other issues. We do not have to call each other names because we disagree

with each other. Debate ought to be to evaluate what are the merits of a position, what are the facts, and what conclusions can one develop from those facts.

My position is to say I think we ought to do this. It is an easier position, I must say, to oppose it. It is an easier position. That is not to say opposing it is necessarily wrong, and there are cases where the opposition might be the right position on some issues. But Mark Twain once said, when he was asked to debate, "Of course, but I need to take the opposing side." They said, "But we have not even told you what the topic is." He said, "That doesn't mean anything to me. That doesn't matter. I only need to take the opposing side because that doesn't require any preparation."

The point he was making is it is always easier to take the opposing side. I say to my friend from Oklahoma, that doesn't mean the opposing side in every debate is wrong. But in this case, the need to ratify the chemical weapons treaty, the affirmative side is the right side for this country. It is urgent and has a time deadline, and we ought to do it. I hope this afternoon, perhaps, we can have some thoughtful discussion about what are the merits of this, why do we have such a large group of Republicans and Democrats from the Bush administration and the Clinton administration and many others who believe this is a priority for this country and believe it is something that this country ought to take a lead on.

My hope is that at end of the day today, or this week, we will have an agreement by which we can at least bring this to the floor, even though some might want to vote against it. I think those who want to do that should give us the opportunity to have a debate and a vote on the chemical weapons treaty. We very much owe that to this country. If and when we get to the decision to give us a debate and a vote on the chemical weapons treaty, I will be happy with that. We have to make our best case and we have to make an affirmative case for this treaty. We have that responsibility. But we cannot do that if we are prevented from seeing it brought to the floor of the Senate for a debate and a vote.

Mr. President, with that I yield the floor.

Does the Senator from Oklahoma intend to speak?

Mr. INHOFE. Yes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I may speak as in morning business.

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

CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I have the utmost respect for my distinguished colleague from North Dakota, Senator DORGAN. I have to admit, how-

ever, I seem to disagree with him more than agree with him. Let me just cover a couple of things that he said that I feel quite strongly—I am sure he believes them, but they are certainly not true.

First of all, as far as the deadline is concerned, it seems like every time you want to get something done you impose a deadline and say we have to do it by—in this case, the 29th of April. There is no deadline on this. Once this thing goes, the vote takes place, we can become a part of it if we want to wait until June or July or August. There is no deadline.

I am reminded a little bit of the deadline they had when we had, I believe it was, the GATT Treaty. We had a special session of the U.S. Senate that was held in November, before the new Senate came in—this was in 1994—that would allow those individuals who were defeated or who retired to vote on something and not the new person who was elected. My daddy taught me a long time ago if the train is coming fast, slow it down. That is what we need to do with the Chemical Weapons Convention. We had a debate on this last fall. I think the debate was a very fruitful one, and a lot of things came out. So let us not talk about a deadline of the 29th. I look forward to debating this and discussing this with the Senator from North Dakota this afternoon.

The next thing that he said that I take issue with is the idea that it is easier to oppose than to support the Chemical Weapons Convention. He is saying it is easier. Maybe it was easier for Mark Twain. This is not easier, because I will tell you I have been very outspoken in opposition to this Chemical Weapons Convention, and all I hear from people is, "You mean you are for chemical weapons?" That is not the issue at all. It is a lot easier to demagog this thing and say, "Let's sign this and do away with chemical weapons." We are not going to do away with chemical weapons, and we all know that.

As far as this is not a matter, as he stated, between the fuzzies and those in favor of a strong national defense, let us wait until the vote takes place and make that determination. I will wager that when the vote takes place, we will find out that those individuals with the highest American security ratings would be the ones who will oppose the Chemical Weapons Convention. That is a very easy thing to do. Just take the ratings and look and see how the vote comes out. Those individuals who consistently vote against such things as the National Missile Defense System, Theater Missile Defense System, vote for all of these disarmaments. A lot of the motive there is to put that money into social programs. I think we all know that.

Let me just cover a couple of things in this brief period of time. First of all, this is not global. The Senator from North Dakota talked about Spain and about France and about all these countries. We don't have a problem with