

Government that is going to keep running can run on a reasonable basis. If anyone doesn't think 98 percent is reasonable, welcome to the real world. Is there a family in America that hasn't had to make do with 2 percent less to spend? Is there a small business in America that hasn't made a 2-percent cut in their budget?

So if a Government employee tells me that the agency can't run at the 98-percent level, I would say that they are not qualified to manage their agency. We can save money to make sure that we are planning for the future. And that is another reason why I think we ought to pass this legislation right now. I think we should let our Government agencies know that if there is a disagreement in October, plan now to know that you are going to be able to operate at a 98-percent level. So, you can plan ahead, and if you need to make provisions, you can do it now. I think that is another good reason for us to do it early, rather than waiting until some other appropriations bill comes up to the floor, which might be in June or July. That is not as much planning time. So we are talking about good government. We are talking about responsible governing and trying to handle the issues for which we are responsible as a U.S. Congress in a responsible way.

Now, I think this is something that the Democrats would probably welcome because they have said, on the occasions where the potential for a Government shutdown has come, that they think this is not a responsible way to run a railroad. They have said that in many heated debates. I hope that they will come along and work with us—and I think they will, frankly. I think there are some Democrats who want to support this. Nobody has focused on it a whole lot because we have had the chemical weapons treaty for this week. But as people start to focus on it next week, I hope they will look at this and support it.

So what we are talking about is a safety net, a funding mechanism for fiscal year 1998 that would trigger on October 1, 1997, if any of the 13 appropriations bills have not been agreed to by the President and Congress. This is good government. This is responsible government, and I hope that we can do it in a bipartisan way.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

Mr. MCCONNELL addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I want to take the floor this morning to make a few comments in favor of the Government Shutdown Prevention Act, which we hope will be a part of the supplemental appropriations next year, which will be offered next week by Senator MCCAIN and Senator HUTCHISON and which, it seems to me, embodies the elements of good government.

We had a pretty contentious discussion in the last Congress about how

best to get a balanced budget. It led to a conclusion that no one was happy with. It involved several temporary shutdowns of the Federal Government. We think it is important that that be avoided for the future. Everybody now understands that was not a good result, and the amendment which will be offered by Senator MCCAIN and Senator HUTCHISON would prevent that.

It would simply provide 98 percent of the fiscal 1997 appropriations bill level and will be subject to all of the terms and conditions of the prior year's bill, with a specific prohibition on initiating any new projects or activities. To put it another way, if we are unable to reach an agreement, it provides for a reasonable funding level to avoid the Government shutdown.

It seems to me this is something we ought to pass on a bipartisan basis unanimously. Obviously, the American people are not interested in seeing the Government shut down again. They are also interested in seeing us reach bipartisan agreement to balance the budget, which we all hope will happen. But the McCain-Hutchison bill will eliminate the threat of a Government shutdown and leverage the President to garner additional funding for his priorities. It is a good-government proposal. It makes it clear that those on my side who thought the Government shutdown might be good leverage in the past decided that it isn't and that it should not be pursued.

It keeps the pressure on all of us to go forward to enact the appropriations bills, because that is what we would ultimately hope would happen in the course of this year as well. I think, Mr. President, this is clearly something that ought to be coupled with the supplemental appropriations which, presumably, we will be dealing with next week.

So I would like to add my strong support to the efforts of Senator MCCAIN and Senator HUTCHISON and commend them for their work on this important issue and suggest that the Senate, hopefully, will pass this unanimously at the appropriate time.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. WELLSTONE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, I would like to speak on several matters that are at least somewhat related.

#### CHILDREN OF ST. ANN

Mr. WELLSTONE. First of all, Mr. President, I would like to welcome, so that this would be part of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, the really beautiful children of St. Ann Episcopal Church in the South Bronx who came here yesterday for a visit. These are wonderful children. They were written about in Jonathan Kozol's book "Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children in the Conscience of a Nation." I wish to let

those children know that it was really wonderful to have them here in the Nation's Capitol and I am sure that someday some of them will serve in the Senate.

#### SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. WELLSTONE. On a second topic that is clearly related to this topic, Mr. President, I had an opportunity to talk to Senator BUMPERS and Senator COCHRAN, who are going to be very key in the appropriations bill, who are working on this supplemental appropriations bill, and I would like to thank them for their effort to really restore adequate funding for the Women, Infants, and Children Program. I think Senator COCHRAN and Senator BUMPERS are very committed to doing it. Both the Washington Post and New York Times had editorials yesterday.

The problem is what we get coming over from the House as opposed to an additional \$76 million that the White House now realizes it needs to make sure that 180,000 women and infant children are not falling between the cracks with inadequate care. This has to do with avoiding low birthweight, childhood anemia, this has to do, frankly, with the whole issue of infant mortality. I cannot think of anything more cruel than for us not to fully fund this program. It works. There has not been one study by anybody, anywhere that has made the case that we must not invest in nutrition for our children.

I am really hopeful that when we mark this bill up next week on the Senate side we will get it right and we will not turn our gaze away from the conditions of children. Too many children are malnourished. Too many women who are expecting children are malnourished.

#### CONFIRMATION OF ALEXIS HERMAN

Mr. WELLSTONE. The third point, Mr. President—and I just have four to make in a short period of time—I come to the floor today to also urge my colleagues to move forward with final confirmation of Alexis Herman as Secretary of Labor. Really, I think it is time to let her go free.

Mr. President, you and I are both on the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee. By unanimous vote, we passed her out of the committee. She is eminently qualified. We have a lot of work to do. We have a controversial TEAM Act that is going to be before us. We have the bill which we spent a lot of time on, the comp-time, flextime bill that has passed out of committee and that is going to come before us. I have been the ranking member on the Subcommittee on Employment and Training. I think Senator DEWINE is doing an excellent job. We are very serious about moving forward with this job training, work force development bill, but we do not have a Secretary of Labor.

Quite frankly, I do not think that people in the Senate should be holding her hostage. They may agree or disagree with a particular Executive order by the President. I do not come here to debate that, although I agree with the President on what he has done. But the point is, it is just absolutely outrageous to hold her hostage, and it is time to free her. It is time to let Alexis Herman, who is eminently well qualified to be Secretary of Labor, become Secretary of Labor.

Please remember, this is a Cabinet-level position connected to the concerns and circumstances of the vast majority of people in this country who are focused on living wage jobs, who are focused on employment conditions, and who are focused on being able to make a decent living for their children, who are focused on economic security for themselves and their families. This is no small position. It is time to let her go forward.

Mr. President, I know that if that does not happen, we will have a major confrontation here in the Senate and I wish we would not have to have it. I hope we do not get to that point, but really it is time to let her free and it is time to no longer hold her hostage.

#### DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. WELLSTONE. My last point, Mr. President, which is again related—and I see my colleague from North Dakota has now come to the floor—is that one of the things I hope we will do next week—the sooner the better and I hope we will do it right—is, please, colleagues, help all of us out from the States of North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota and some other States as well. Many of the people who we truly love have just been devastated by this flooding. It really seems of Biblical proportions. It is unbelievable what has happened.

We are now trying to put together a disaster relief bill to enable people to get back on their own two feet, to be able to rebuild their lives, and to rebuild our communities. The bill that is coming over from the House Appropriations Committee takes us in that direction, but we have to do better on the Senate side. This is, of course, evolving. We do not know the extent of the damage yet. But I ask my colleagues, I plead with my colleagues, please give us all of your support. We are going to have to especially make sure that we get the assistance directly to individuals.

For a lot of our small businesses that have been completely wiped out, completely wiped out—people have just lost their homes—right now we do not have near the direct grant assistance we need, and some of the loan programs just will not help them get back on their feet. All of us are working very hard on this. This is truly an example of there but for the grace of God go I.

Every time there has ever been a disaster relief bill come to the floor of the

Senate, I have never hesitated to support it because I always know that this could happen to anybody.

Nobody in South Dakota or North Dakota or Minnesota asked for this. People did not ask for their towns to be under water, did not ask to lose their homes, did not ask to be refugees, and did not ask to have their small businesses wiped out. If there is ever a role for Government, it is to try to help people that really need help.

Mr. President, I just urge all of my colleagues, please, help us out, Democrats and Republicans alike. Please let us do well for the people in our States. This is something that I think really, truly should and must unite all of us together.

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

Mr. CONRAD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized for 10 minutes.

Mr. CONRAD. I thank the Presiding Officer.

#### DISASTERS IN NORTH DAKOTA

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I rise today to again update my colleagues on the extraordinary set of disasters that we have experienced in my home State of North Dakota.

As the President knows, we have had really an extraordinary set of events. First of all, the toughest winter in our history with over 10 feet of snow that fell in North Dakota, the most we have ever had, followed by, in the first week of April, the most powerful winter storm in 50 years that saw nearly 2 feet of snow fall in much of the State. It was accompanied by an ice storm that took down the electrical grid for 80,000 people in my State who were without power for a week.

On top of that, there were 70-mile-an-hour winds that were devastating. Then we followed that with a flood that has been termed a "500-year flood." But we are now told in testimony yesterday the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration indicated it was a 1,000-year flood.

In the midst of all that, the city of Grand Forks, a city of 50,000, is almost entirely evacuated, the largest evacuation of a city that we have seen in the United States in anyone's memory. Virtually the entire city, 95 percent of the city, has been evacuated and have been told they may not be back in their homes for as much as a month.

Truly an extraordinary set of events.

Today, I would like to thank President Clinton for traveling to North Dakota to see the devastation firsthand. I would also like to thank the Cabinet officials who traveled with the President, including Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala. Donna has a twin sister who lives in North Dakota and so has a special interest and concern about our State.

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman was there. Housing and Urban Develop-

ment Secretary Cuomo was there, and Transportation Secretary Slater. I said to Secretary Slater, who has been there three times in the last 3 weeks, that he about qualifies for paying North Dakota income tax he has been there so often. And, of course, the head of FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, James Lee Witt, has also been there three times in the last 3 weeks. We deeply appreciate the help that he has brought to our State.

Also with us were high officials of the Corps of Engineers, who have waged a valiant fight. Let me just say that they were fighting this flood in 83 spots up and down the Red River Valley. They won many of those battles. We lost a fight in Grand Forks, but I want to make clear it was not because the corps did not wage a valiant and heroic effort. I think everyone in our State would say the Corps of Engineers has just done a superb job.

Mr. President, we now face the difficult task of recovery. We will be considering a disaster supplemental bill in the committee next Tuesday.

I want to just share briefly with my colleagues photographs from Grand Forks and from other parts of eastern North Dakota so people can see for themselves what has happened.

This shows part of downtown Grand Forks. As someone said to me, it looks like Dresden after the firebomb. After the flood completely swamped the city, 90 percent of the town was flooded, a town of 50,000 people. A fire then broke out that burned much of three blocks of downtown Grand Forks.

As you can see, this is one of the buildings that was gutted. Included in buildings that were destroyed were the newspaper, Grand Forks Herald, which has already announced plans to rebuild, and also the largest bank was destroyed. So we have had just one set of extraordinary occurrences after another.

I talked to one man who called me. He said, "Senator, I'm over in Detroit Lakes, MN. My home has been destroyed. I did not have flood insurance because I was outside the 100-year flood plain. Nobody thought there was any threat to us. My business has been destroyed. All of my inventory is gone. I was trying to reach my insurance agent to find out if I had any coverage, but of course I have no idea where he is. He's been evacuated to some other town."

He said, "I tried to call my banker, but my bank burned down. So I have no idea what the status of my accounts are there in terms of what's happened to receipts. I have 80 employees, and I'm responsible for their livelihood. I have no idea where they are. They were evacuated to different towns."

He said, "My wife turned to me when we were considering all this, and she said, 'Well, you know, let's remember what's important. We have our lives. We're healthy. And we can come back.'"

That is the attitude that has pervaded this community. I am just going