

Council of Graduate Schools.
 Council of Independent Colleges.
 National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.
 National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges.

Ms. COLLINS. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I yield back the remainder of my time.

Mrs. MURRAY addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

HANFORD REACH OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, this weekend the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee is going to hold a field hearing in Mattawa, WA. We will discuss S. 200, my legislation to designate the Hanford Reach of the Columbia River as a wild and scenic river.

The Hanford Reach is the last free-flowing stretch of this mighty river. Protecting it for future generations is a top priority for me.

In 1995, I convened a group of local citizens, and I asked them to help me find the best way to protect this portion of the Columbia River. They unanimously concluded an act of Congress designating the reach as a wild and scenic river, with a recreational classification, would be the best way to preserve this valuable resource.

In fact, a poll of registered voters in central Washington done last year indicated that 76 percent favored designation of the Hanford Reach as a wild and scenic river, while only 11 percent opposed it. So the will of the region is clear: The reach needs the best protection we can give it to make sure it remains accessible to everyone.

Protecting the Hanford Reach is not about local versus Federal control. It is about giving a natural treasure the best possible protection that we can. And it is also about promoting jobs in the long term and protecting our heritage.

What does the designation do? First, it puts central Washington on the map as a home to a resource found nowhere else on Earth—a river unique and important enough to become part of the U.S. national wild and scenic river system. Second, it protects the river in its current condition. It allows all of the existing uses to continue, but ensures the river stays forever the way we see it today. In fact, my bill specifically grandfathers in current uses protecting existing economic interests and enhancing the river's future economic value to our region.

There is much more at stake here than who manages the river. This issue is much bigger than that. We all know what problem we have with protecting salmon. ESA listings have been made for the Snake River and are being considered for the Columbia. If we ever want to get ahead of the salmon problem, we have to start by protecting the reach. My bill gives us a cheap and easy way to do just that. It simply

transfers Federal property from one agency to another; no private lands need to be acquired or jeopardized.

Let me reiterate, we simply can't afford to take chances with the one part of the river that works well—and inexpensively—for fish. Compared to drawdowns, dam removal and other suggestions that we have heard for saving salmon, permanent protection of the reach gives ratepayers, river users and irrigators a virtually cost-free way of accomplishing what could be a very expensive recovery effort.

We have done a lot of talking about the reach, and I am convinced that we are getting closer. It seems to me when you have a resource that is this important to the State, reasonable people ought to be able to find a way to agree on the best way to protect it. I am committed to bringing people together around that goal and keeping them together until we finish the job.

Mr. President, I look forward to hearing the testimony this weekend, and I thank my senior colleague, Senator GORTON, for helping me put this hearing together.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. 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. REID. Mr. President, it is my understanding that we are in the morning business hour.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

TREND TOWARD RACIAL, ETHNIC, AND RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about a disturbing trend in this country, a trend that to me was highlighted by a recent incident in South Carolina.

This incident took place several weeks ago. I was aware of it at the time it occurred. It has been something that has been troubling to me since then, and I felt it was appropriate and important that we spread on the RECORD of this Senate this particular incident, which occurred while the State Board of Education of the State of South Carolina was discussing whether it could display the Ten Commandments on the walls of public schools.

During this discussion, a member of this board provided a suggestion for groups which might oppose the placing of the Ten Commandments upon school walls. A direct quote: "Screw the Buddhists and kill the Muslims."

Mr. President, I find it contemptible that such an arcane, bigoted statement would come from someone who is tasked with the responsibility of educating our children, a member of the board of education.

I find it even more shocking that not only would someone think this, but that they would go so far as to articulate it at a meeting of a board of education. Can we imagine what would have been the reaction to such a comment had it been directed toward Christians or Jews, Mexican-Americans, African-Americans? I find this individual's behavior reprehensible, and while I find his behavior reprehensible, the larger issue is an increasing trend in this country toward racial, religious, and ethnic intolerance.

The Founders of this country fled persecution and intolerance in Europe and came to this country to be free from persecution, mostly religious persecution. Our country was founded on the principle of equality, and our Constitution, Mr. President—this document—which consists of just a few pages ensures freedom of religion and freedom from persecution.

In this country, we are very fortunate to have the freedoms that we have guaranteed by our Constitution. These freedoms make us the envy of the world and are the strength of our Nation.

I, however, think that, even though we have many protected rights in our Constitution, we have to speak out against individuals and especially people who are on a board of education who say, "Screw the Buddhists and kill the Muslims."

Because of the liberties we have in our country, this great country of the United States of America, immigrants from all over the world desire to come here and start a new life, just as our ancestors did. As a result, we are becoming a much more diverse Nation, increasingly diverse. The diversity within our Nation requires greater tolerance, patience, and a deeper level of understanding.

Mr. President, I am a member of a religion where, in the last century, significant persecution took place. People were killed as a result of their belief in the religion that I now profess. I feel that we all must speak out against religious intolerance. People who speak out about screwing the Buddhists and killing the Muslims—you know, Mr. President, in our country, sad as it might be, there are people who would follow the leadership of a person like this and proceed to do just that.

The remarks made by this school board member reflect a deep-seated racial and religious intolerance and ignorance that we should not allow to go unnoticed. This racial ignorance and lack of understanding are catalysts to intense racial intolerance.

I am concerned about the steady erosion of racial and religious tolerance in our society, and intolerance. Intolerance is often the basis for much of the crime committed in America, and it is the very essence of hate crimes. Hate crimes are those crimes committed against an individual or a group because of their convictions or their ethnicity.

In 1995, the last records we have, the Justice Department cataloged nearly 8,000 hate crimes. Those are the only ones reported; many were unreported. This number is growing at an alarming rate. Hate crime is an affront to our basic commitment to religious liberty and racial tolerance, and it poses a challenge to our entire Nation and our future as a common community.

The remarks made by this school board member are disturbing. They are indicative of an increasing racial and religious intolerance and serve only to incite maliciousness against Muslims, Buddhists, and non-Christians in general. This school board member's comments are illustrative of the need in this country for increased understanding and patience. It is also, Mr. President, I believe, a call for us to speak out against this intolerance. It is this understanding and patience that we need to have which provides the foundation for a more tolerant America. Tolerance and understanding are crucial for us to continue fostering quality, dignity, and peace within America.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum. I withhold for my friend from Wyoming.

Mr. THOMAS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 10 minutes.

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

MOST-FAVORED-NATION STATUS FOR CHINA

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I come to the floor today as chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on East Asia and Pacific Affairs to discuss and formally state my support for the extension this year of most-favored-nation status to the People's Republic of China. I want to stress at the beginning that supporting China MFN is not an issue of approving or disapproving China's behavior. Rather, it is an issue of how we best work to influence that behavior in the future. For several reasons, I do not believe that withholding MFN is an effective tool in doing that.

First, I firmly believe that invoking most-favored-nation status would hurt the United States more than the Chinese. It would be the economic equivalent of saying, "Lift up a rock and drop it on your own foot."

Simply put, we are talking about American jobs. It is estimated that United States exports to China support around 200,000 American jobs; the Chinese purchases now account for 42 percent of our fertilizer exports and over 10 percent of our grain exports as well.

Last year, China bought over \$1 billion worth of civilian aircraft, \$700 million in telecommunications equipment, \$340 million in specialized machinery, and \$270 million of heating and cooling equipment.

As China's economy continues its dynamic growth, the potential market for increased sales, of course, will grow as

well. Our withdrawal of MFN would certainly be met with in-kind retaliation by the Chinese, who are fully capable of shopping elsewhere for their imports, as we have seen with Boeing and Airbus, with resulting harm to America's economy.

Second, revoking MFN would have a damaging effect on the economies of our close allies and trading partners Hong Kong and Taiwan. The vast majority of Chinese trade passes through Hong Kong. Putting the brakes on that trade would result in a 32 to 45 percent reduction—around \$12 billion worth—of Hong Kong's reexports from the PRC to the United States.

In addition, it is estimated that there would be about a \$4.4 billion drop in income to Hong Kong, a loss of 86,000 jobs, and a 2.8 reduction in GDP.

Moreover, revoking MFN would have the greatest negative impact on the southern China provinces where Hong Kong and Taiwanese businesses have made substantial investments, as well as the United States. But I want to stress this point. It is in these provinces that the political and social changes for the better are occurring.

Mr. President, on my last trip to China—my only trip to China—I traveled from Beijing in the north through Shanghai and on to Guangzhou in the south. In Beijing, talks with the Chinese centered solely on politics, Taiwan particularly. The vast majority of the population still ride bicycles. The availability of western goods, while increasing, is limited. The role of the party in the people's daily lives is still significant.

But as we traveled further south, I was struck by the change in attitudes and interests. People were much less concerned about politics and ideology and much more concerned about continuing trade, their standard of living, as well as budding democratic freedoms. Western consumer goods are widely available, the minority of people ride bikes, and most instead drive cars and motorcycles. The party apparatus is much less ideologically communistic and more bureaucratic.

In my view, there is one cause for these changes, changes in the everyday lives of the average Chinese citizens—commercial contacts with the West, especially the United States.

Mr. President, by opening up their economy to market reforms and economic contacts with the rest of the world, the Chinese authorities have let the genie out of the bottle. If we revoke MFN, in effect cutting off trade with China, we only serve to retard this opening-up process, a process that we should be doing in every way to advance and encourage the advancement there.

Third, revoking China's MFN status would place it among a small handful of countries to which we do not extend this normal trading status. Most favored nation is a bit of a misnomer. It is actually normal relations. But we exclude that normal relationship with Cuba, Laos, North Korea, Serbia, and Afghanistan. We would be relegating

China to this grouping, and I believe it would do irreparable harm to our bilateral relationship and to the security and stability of East Asia as a whole.

China is very attuned to the concept of face. Placing it on the same level as the world's most outcast nations, while perhaps not undeserving in some fields, would needlessly provoke a backlash from the Chinese which would frost over whatever strides we have made in the past.

Now, I want to make it clear that I in no way condone the policies of the Chinese nor the actions. I am by no means an apologist for the PRC nor a proponent of foreign policy solely for the sake of business interests. No one can argue that China's actions in many fields do not deserve some serious response from us. The PRC has, at best, a sad, sad human rights record. It imprisons prodemocracy dissidents. It has done so in such numbers since the Tiananmen Square incident that there are no active dissidents. It prosecutes religious minorities, including Christians, focusing most harshly on the Buddhists in Tibet where it has closed monasteries and jailed monks and nuns. And it persecutes ethnic minorities, concentrating their attention recently on the Tibetans.

The PRC consistently fails to live up to the terms of its trade agreements with us, especially in the areas of trade barriers and intellectual property rights. It has taken two separate agreements and several years to get intellectual property rights moving in the proper direction, but they are still not doing what they are supposed to do.

It has made several decisions which call into question its commitments to preserving democracy in Hong Kong, including the most recent round involving the so-called Provisional Legislature. It ignores its commitments to some international agreements.

So all in all, it is not a good situation. The question of course is, how do we best deal with that?

Mr. President, I am the first to insist that we need to address these serious issues, but it is clear that our current China policy, which the administration characterizes as constructive engagement but has recently retooled as multifaceted is not up to the task. The Chinese will continue to walk over us as long as their actions meet with little or no credible repercussions.

But while we need to make some response, it is equally clear to me that most favored nation is not going to solve any of these problems. As I have mentioned, its revocation would only cause more problems than it solves. Moreover, threatening MFN withdrawal has come to be hollow and meaningless. We know it and the Chinese know it.

It is like watching a movie you have seen several times before; you know the plot, you know the actors, you