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Senate

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Lord God, You know us as we really are. You know the inner person behind our highly polished exteriors; You know when we are tired and need Your strength; You know about our worries and anxieties and offer Your comfort; You understand our fears and frustrations and assure us of Your presence; You feel our hurts and infuse Your healing love. Flood our inner beings with Your peace so that we can live with confidence and courage.

You have told us that to whom much is given, much is required. Thank You that You have taught us also that of whom much is required, much shall be given. Lord, You require a great deal of the women and men of this Senate. Provide them with an extra measure of Your strength, wisdom, and judgment for the crucial work of this next session of the 106th Congress.

We thank You for all the people who make it possible for the Senate to function effectively. Especially, we thank You for the Senators' staffs and all those here in the Senate Chamber who work cheerfully and diligently for long hours to keep the legislative process moving smoothly. Help us to take no one for granted and express our gratitude to everyone.

Now we commit this day to You, for You are our Lord. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable CONRAD BURNS, a Senator from the State of Montana, led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Senator BURNS is recognized.

Mr. BURNS. I thank the Chair.

I welcome our colleagues back from the August recess.

SCHEDULE

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, today the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 1 p.m. Following morning business, the Senate will stand in recess until 2:15 p.m. so that the weekly party conferences can meet. Following the conference meetings, the Senate will move to executive session for the consideration of two judicial nominees. Therefore, Senators can expect two consecutive votes at 2:15 today.

When the Senate returns to legislative session, it will resume consideration of the Interior appropriations bill. Amendments are expected to be offered, and therefore Senators can expect additional votes throughout today's session.

It is hoped that the Senate can complete the Interior appropriations bill on Thursday at a reasonable time. As a reminder, there will be no votes on Friday in observance of the Rosh Hashanah holiday. The majority leader looks forward to a productive legislative period as we complete the appropriations process, and he thanks all Senators in advance for their cooperation.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, as in executive session, I ask unanimous consent that at 2:15 p.m. today the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar Nos. 173 and 175.

I further ask unanimous consent that following 5 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form, the Senate then proceed immediately to two consecutive votes on the confirmation of

the nominations with no intervening action or debate. I also ask unanimous consent that following the votes on the nominations, the motions to reconsider be laid on the table, the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate then return to legislative session.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BURNS. I also ask unanimous consent that it be in order to ask for the yeas and nays at this time on both nominations.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BURNS. Therefore, I now ask for the yeas and nays on Calendar Nos. 173 and 175.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there a sufficient second? There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

Mr. BURNS. I ask unanimous consent that the period of morning business be divided as follows: Senator DASCHLE or his designee in control of the first 30 minutes; Senator THOMAS in control of the second 30 minutes.

I further ask consent that immediately following the use or yielding back of those times, the Senate stand in recess until 2:15 today for the weekly policy luncheons.

I further ask unanimous consent that following the votes at 2:20, Senator FEINGOLD be recognized to speak in morning business for up to 30 minutes.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for 10 minutes, followed on our side by Senator BOXER and Senator DORGAN, 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank the Chair.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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EAST TIMOR

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, while Senator FEINGOLD is in the Chamber, I wish to indicate my support for his effort—our effort—to make it crystal clear to the Government of Indonesia that the brutal murder of the men and women of East Timor has to stop, that we will hold the Government of Indonesia accountable, that we will do everything we can to exert our leverage, including the question of whether there will be any financial assistance, and that the world community is watching. We want to communicate from the floor of the Senate our support to the people of East Timor.

CBS-VIACOM MERGER

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, before going to the main topic of my remarks, I wish to briefly speak about a story today in the papers that I just think Senators, Democrats and Republicans, must take note of. This is the report. Top executives of CBS and VIACOM will be huddling today with top officials of the Federal Communications Commission. CBS-VIACOM executives will be lobbying the FCC to approve their proposed merger and to relax FCC restrictions on media concentration.

Mr. President, I think that FCC Chairman Kennard has done an excellent job, but I do believe this private meeting would be improper and inappropriate. I think the meeting should be held in public. I think the public needs to know what is going on. I say this because I cannot think of anything more frightening in a representative democracy than to continue to see this consolidation of media, these media mergers, and this concentration of power over the flow of information.

I think this is a terribly important question. I think it goes to the heart of the functioning of our democracy. Our democracy depends upon citizen access to a wide and divergent range of views and information. We depend upon a free and independent media that will hold both private and public power accountable to people. This dramatic surge in media concentration makes this more difficult. It makes it more difficult for our media to perform these essential functions. I believe we are seeing a breathtaking, frightening concentration of power in the media over the flow of information, and I think it constitutes a direct threat to our democracy.

I hope this meeting and this debate will take place publicly and that there will be meaningful coverage by the major media in our country of this proposed merger of CBS and Viacom. The public needs to be engaged in this debate. This is a serious and important question. Media concentration is a real threat to our representative democracy.

(Mr. BURNS assumed the Chair.)

FAMILY FARMERS

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I will take a brief period of time today, I say to my colleagues and to the Chair who cares deeply about this issue as well, I intend to take the time I need to give a report to the Senate and to the country about what is happening in agriculture. I say this to the Chair who I know cares deeply about this.

I have spent most all of August organizing with farmers. I have spent almost all my time in our agricultural and rural communities. I can tell my colleagues that we are now experiencing an economic convulsion, and on our present course we are going to lose a whole generation of farmers and producers. This is not just a battle or a struggle for a fair price for family farmers, it is a struggle for the survival of our rural communities.

I spent time in northwest Minnesota, in southeast Minnesota, in west central Minnesota, and then in southwest Minnesota, at one farm gathering after another. The good news is that many farmers turned out for our meetings, and that made me proud as a Senator. The bad news is that people are in such economic pain. The bad news is that people are in such desperate shape. The bad news is that people who have worked so hard and are asking for nothing more than a decent price so they can have a decent standard of living to give their children the care they know they need and deserve are not getting a decent price.

This Congress has to take action, and it has to take action this fall. We can get the emergency financial assistance out to people. Because of the way we are doing it, too much assistance will be going to some people who do not need it as much, and not enough will be going to many people who need it more. But it is a price crisis and we have to get the price up. We need to take the cap off the loan rate. We need to give the producer some leverage in the marketplace—with a farmer-owned reserve—and the ability to extend the payback period of the loan rate. We need to give our producers a fair shot. We need to get the prices up. Our farmers do not have cash-flow and they are going to be driven off the land.

I believe our country will deeply regret what is now happening in agriculture. It is a food scarcity issue. Who is going to farm the land? Are we going to have affordable food? Is it going to be food that is healthy and safe for our families? What about the environment? What about the whole idea of pattern of land ownership?

So much is at stake for America, but I do not think this crisis, of which the Presiding Officer is aware, is breaking through. No amount of self-reliance is going to help the farmers, given the prices they are getting for wheat, corn, and soybeans. Our livestock producers are faced with the most outrageous situation: they find themselves confronted with a few packers who control almost all of the market in terms of whom they can sell to.

Yesterday in Iowa we had an important hearing with Senator GRASSLEY and Senator HARKIN, and we had several hundred farmers there. I said that we should have a moratorium on all mergers and acquisitions and marketing agreements between agribusinesses with revenues over \$50 million until the Congress reviews the antitrust laws. I am going to bring this moratorium to the floor, speaking about concentration of power.

Whatever happened to the Sherman Act and the Clayton Act and the work of Senator Kefauver? What does it mean when we have a few packers and they control almost all of the market? What does it mean, with our livestock producers facing extinction and IBP and ConAgra and a lot of these large outfits making record profits?

Mr. President, this is an injustice. I am telling Democrats and Republicans, we have to make it a priority and we have to push through legislation over the next 2 months that will make a difference. A lot of these farmers are going to be gone if we don't. I speak today to give a brief report, although I am going to start coming to the floor and talking at great length about the number of farmers we are losing.

Tracy Beckman, who directs the Farm Services Administration, has figures on all our counties, on what an emergency situation this is, on what a crisis situation this is, and on what we can do. We can take the cap off the loan rate. We can rewrite the farm bill. Freedom to Farm has become the "Freedom to Farm for No Money," the "Freedom to Fail." We have to change the farm bill. We have to take some antitrust action. We have to be on the side of family farmers and producers. We have to make sure they get a fair price. We have to have a fair trade policy and we need to do it now. Speeches are not enough.

Rural American farmers, when you come here next week, turn up the heat. When you meet with Senators and Representatives, turn up the heat. Ultimately, it is going to take rural America raising heck in order to turn this situation around.

This August, for me, was the most difficult during my time in the Senate. It was the most emotional 3 weeks I ever spent with people in my State. I say to the Senator from California, who is a good friend, what happens at these farm gatherings is that people will say to you: Thanks for caring, it makes me feel good. And you reach out to shake their hand, and they are crying, just crying because they are going to lose everything. Their farm has been in the family for generations. It is where they work, it is where they live, and they are going to lose it all. The implement dealers, the bankers, the educators, the hospital people, and the health care people all say: Our rural communities are going to be ghost towns.

This is needless suffering. This does not have to be. This is not Adam