

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

Smith's invisible hand. It is not some law of gravity. The only inevitability about what is happening to family farmers is the inevitability of a stacked deck. If we change policies and give them leverage so they can get a decent price in the marketplace, if we take on some of these conglomerates and put free enterprise in the food industry, and if we move forward on trade policy, we can make a huge difference.

This is an issue that goes to the heart and soul of what America is about. America, if you are listening to what we are saying in the Senate, this is all about the country, this is about food scarcity, this is about getting food at a price you can afford. It is about who is going to own the land. This is about whether or not we are going to have a rural America. This is about whether we are going to have a few conglomerates muscle their way to the dinner table and exercise their power over all phases of the industry—over the producers, over the consumers, over the taxpayers—or whether we are committed to a family farm structure in agriculture.

I come from a State, Minnesota, where family farmers are really important. They are so important to my State, but they are important to our country. I hope and pray over the next 2 months we will take action in Congress that will make a positive difference and will change this policy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, before I begin my remarks, I ask unanimous consent that Senator FEINGOLD and Senator REED each be given 10 minutes at the conclusion of Senator DORGAN's time. Of course, if people from the other side want that courtesy, we will be happy to support that.

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

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, before Senator WELLSTONE leaves the floor, I thank him. I thought his comments were very poignant, and what he is addressing is some of the unfinished business of this body, things we have to take care of. Certainly one of them is the problems of the family farmer.

EAST TIMOR

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I add my voice in praising Senator FEINGOLD for his leadership in the Foreign Relations Committee, on which I serve, on this whole issue of East Timor.

There are some things we can do very quickly in the Senate to send a message to Indonesia that we will not stand by and see this violation of human rights occur. We have some leverage. We have some agreements. We can make a difference.

THANKING THE CHAPLAIN

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I thank the Chaplain today for his very inclu-

sive prayer, calling to our attention the things we take for granted, the good people around here who work so hard and always do it in a way that makes us feel as though we are not asking them to work very hard, and we are asking them to work very hard. They are always pleasant. That includes the staff on both sides. I thank the Chaplain for that.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I rise today, first of all, to say it is good to be back in the Senate because I am very hopeful we can do something, in the remaining days and weeks we have, to make life better for the people we represent. I also have had some wonderful interaction with the people of my State. They have some very strong opinions on many of the issues facing us.

I think the message I got more than anything was, can't you get together on both sides of the aisle and address the issues that impact our daily lives? I certainly think that is an appropriate sentiment.

That is not to say that the Congress shouldn't be doing its oversight investigations, be it the Waco incident or what has occurred in Russia. I am not against any of that. I am for that. But we have to do everything around here. We have to do the oversight, but we also have to pay attention to business.

There is an article in today's Washington Post written by Elizabeth Drew, who wrote a book called "The Corruption of American Politics: What Went Wrong and Why." She has a very interesting article called "Try Governing for a Change." She says to Congress: Welcome back. We hope you had a nice vacation. We hope you will use the few weeks that remain to govern, rather than to position yourselves politically.

That is my message today. We have unfinished business. I will go through some specifics. I am not going to just stand up and talk in generalities. I want to be specific.

One of the first things we have to deal with is school safety. Our children are back at school. We have provisions in the juvenile justice bill that are now in conference that can make schools safer. We also have provisions in the commerce bill that will make schools safer. What are some of these?

The Gregg-Boxer amendment that is in the Commerce bill, which would provide \$200 million for school safety activities, including security equipment, hiring more police officers, and violence prevention programs for our children, is a bipartisan provision. It passed overwhelmingly. It ought to move forward. We ought to have that help for our schools.

The gun control provisions in juvenile justice that are so very important and, might I add, are not radical—they are very moderate—I want to see us pass.

We closed the gun show loophole that allowed criminals to get guns at gun

shows without going through background checks. We banned the importation of high-capacity ammunition clips which are used in semiautomatic assault weapons. We required child safety devices be sold with every handgun. We required the Federal Trade Commission and the Attorney General to study the extent to which the gun industry is marketing its products to our students, our children. We made it illegal to sell or give a semiautomatic weapon to anyone under the age of 18. That is an assault weapon.

These are very simple. They are very straightforward. We passed them in the Senate, and they are in conference. I have yet to see that conference committee meet. I certainly hope it will. I look forward to the opportunity for getting the people's business of protecting our children done. That is school safety.

We have a lot of other unfinished business. There are not that many things but they are all very important. We have the issue of saving Medicare—a very important part of the President's proposal, saving Medicare. We have to get down to it. We have to do it. We have the issue of paying down the debt. We have a huge debt. We have an opportunity with the surplus to pay it down and save all those interest payments on the debt that we continue to pay out every single day, \$1 billion a day just to pay the interest payment on the debt that has accumulated since the 1980s. We ought to pay that down.

On the minimum wage, I was amazed to see a report in the Los Angeles Times about the condition of people who live in Los Angeles County. I know my friend, the Chaplain, is from that area. More than 20 percent of Los Angeles County residents live below the official poverty line. That is \$16,450 a year for a family of four. This is reflective of a lot of people in our Nation. It is not just Los Angeles. When most people think of Los Angeles, they think of Hollywood. They think of millionaires. They have to understand what is happening to real people.

Twenty percent are living in poverty. One out of every three children in Los Angeles lives in poverty. If you go to Los Angeles and see little children, one out of three of them is living in poverty. That is up from one out of four in 1990.

You might say: Well, maybe it is just minority kids. No, it is a lot of children, across the board. It is 21 percent of Anglo children living in poverty; 21 percent of Asian American children are living in poverty in Los Angeles; 33 percent of African American children are living in poverty in Los Angeles; 43 percent of Latino children are living in poverty in Los Angeles; 12 percent of elderly people are living in poverty in Los Angeles, an increase from 9 percent in 1990; 2.7 million residents of Los Angeles County have no health insurance.

What I am saying is, when we talk about the minimum wage, this is real. Most of these people are working very