

Mr. THOMAS. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. THOMAS pertaining to the introduction of S. 826 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BUNNING). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask consent to speak for 20 minutes in morning business.

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

NATO ACTIONS IN KOSOVO

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I wanted to speak about three items today. First, I want to talk for just a moment about Kosovo and the NATO actions in Kosovo.

I had a town meeting in North Dakota over the weekend and had a fairly large number of North Dakotans pack into a rather small room, and we had a 1½ hour discussion about the airstrikes in which NATO, including the United States, is involved in Yugoslavia and in Kosovo. I expect I am joined by all of my colleagues when I say I hope and pray the hostilities in the region will cease. I hope Mr. Milosevic will pull back his Serb troops and that we will be able to restore peace and order and have the opportunity to find a way to provide those refugees who have streamed across the border the opportunity to go home.

Most North Dakotans who have communicated with me, and those who came to this weekend's meeting I had in Fargo on this subject, are anxious and nervous and concerned about what is happening in the region.

They do not have any better answers than I or my colleagues, or anyone else for that matter, on what to do when someone like Mr. Milosevic commits genocide or ethnic cleansing, including substantial massacres of the civilian population in the region of Kosovo.

The question that all of us at this weekend's meeting in North Dakota posed was, What shall we do? Shall we say it is none of our business, it is not in our part of the world? Genocide committed by Mr. Milosevic or ethnic cleansing is not something we need to be concerned about? I think most people believe that is not the answer either.

Clearly, we do not want in 5 or 10 years from now to look back and say, that genocide or Holocaust, or whatever it was Mr. Milosevic committed, killing thousands, perhaps ultimately hundreds of thousands, is something that we did not care about. If that were the case, I think it would be reasonable to say shame on us.

We must be involved and we must care. The question is, How do we address it? How do we effectively thwart the attempt by Mr. Milosevic to clear all of the Albanians out of Kosovo? How do we thwart his attempt to massacre innocent civilians with the Serb Army? How do we restore order to this region?

I have supported the airstrikes, and I hope and pray they succeed in driving Mr. Milosevic back. I have said before and I reiterate today that I do not and will not support the introduction of U.S. ground troops to the Balkans. I think that would be a horrible mistake.

Frankly, the bulk of the airstrikes have occurred in the Balkan region with U.S. planes and U.S. pilots. If, in fact, ground troops are ultimately needed, I believe it is the responsibility of the European countries to commit those ground troops. I know NATO is involved in this as an alliance, and we are a significant part of that alliance. But the United States bears the heaviest burden in the air war, bears the heaviest cost in the airstrikes, and I think if ground troops ultimately are necessary—and I hope they will not be—I think those ground troops must be furnished by the European countries. I will not support the position that we should introduce U.S. ground troops in the Balkans. I believe that would be a serious mistake, and I cannot and will not support that.

Let me again say, I do not believe my constituents or my colleagues have any easy answers. This is not an easy situation. Things are happening in the Balkans that I think all of the world looks at with horror and says, "We must do something to try to respond to it." But it is not easy.

Dozens of foreign powers over many centuries have gone to the Balkans only to experience profound disappointment in their attempt to change something that was internally happening in that region of the world.

Let me hope, along with my colleagues, that these airstrikes by NATO will convince Mr. Milosevic that the price is too high to continue doing what he is doing in that region to so many innocent men, women, and children. Let us hope that this is a success sooner rather than later and we can provide some peace and stability to that region.

FAMILY FARMERS

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I want to talk just for a moment about agriculture and the challenge facing agriculture.

On Saturday, I was in an airplane and opened up a newspaper to an interesting article. I have spoken about agriculture and family farmers during the past weeks. I have talked about what is happening in our part of the country with the depopulation of middle America, rural communities drying up—shriveling like prunes, people mov-

ing out—not moving in, Main Street businesses boarding up, family farmers going broke, and nobody seemingly caring very much.

The business section of the Minneapolis Tribune had two fascinating stories on the front page. They respond in a kind of perverse way to what is happening, both in this Chamber and also around the country with respect to the policy dealing with family farmers.

The first article: "Cargill Profits from Decline in Farm Prices; 53 percent jump in earnings expected." Cargill is a large company and has always done quite well, I believe. It is a privately held company. It purchases agricultural products and is involved in a wide range of activities adding value to agricultural products.

"Cargill Profits from Decline in Farm Prices." Is that unusual? No. Big agribusinesses all too often are profiting from the misery of America's family farmers. Family farmers on the one side go broke; while Cargill sees a 53 percent jump in earnings. Cargill, incidentally, wants now to marry up with Continental Grain. Cargill and Continental want to get married, merge, and become bigger, with more market power.

In the question of market power, it is reasonable to ask, who wins and who loses? Family farmers all too often lose, and those with the most market power win. "Cargill Profits from the Decline in Farm Prices." You could wipe out the name "Cargill" and include any number of agribusinesses. I am not picking on Cargill; they just happened to be in this paper on Saturday.

Let's go to the article on the bottom of the front page. Family farmers are going broke because commodity prices have collapsed. The price of wheat has collapsed. The article states, "General Mills to boost cereal prices 2.5 percent":

General Mills, Inc., the maker of Cheerios, Wheaties and Lucky Charms, is raising cereal prices an average of 2.5 percent.

One might ask the question, in terms of public policy, What is going on in this country when the folks who gas up the tractor in the spring, borrow money to buy seed, fertilizer, plant the crop, harvest the wheat, sell it in the market, and then go broke because they are told that the wheat they produced from their fields has no value? But the people who buy that wheat and turn it into Cheerios or Wheaties or Lucky Charms, even though the prices of commodities have collapsed and they are paying the farmer less—in fact, so little that family farmers are going broke in record numbers—they say they need to boost cereal prices that people pay at the grocery store.

I woke up this morning and I ate a bowl of cereal. I will not advertise which cereal it was, but I ate a bowl of cereal. I looked at the box, after I had seen this in the paper on Saturday, and I read the label about what is in this

cereal I am eating. I will tell you what is in the cereal—grain.

So this company buys it from farmers, pays them a pittance, and then they puff it or crisp it or shred it. Once they have it all puffed and labeled as Puffed Wheat or Shredded Wheat, the process is all done. They have added the air to the grain or they have shredded it with a knife, then they put it on the grocery store shelf and charge a fortune for it.

Buy a box of cereal at the grocery store and ask yourself whether you like that price. Now, they say it is not enough. While farmers are going broke, they say they need to boost cereal prices. Talk about a disconnection and evidence that the market system does not work in agriculture. There must surely be a golden rule here, the one that says—those who have the gold make the rules—there must be a golden rule here that says cereal manufacturers can increase prices with impunity while family farmers go broke because they are selling their grain at the elevator and are told that their food has no value.

I mentioned last week an auction sale by a farm wife in North Dakota. She wrote a letter and said they were forced to sell out. She said her 17-year-old son would not even come down, he stayed in bed during the day of the auction sale and refused to come down to witness the auction sale of this farm because he was heartbroken. It was breaking his heart. It was breaking his heart that they were having to sell their farm. He wanted to farm.

This is all about human misery, failure—and it is not their fault. It is not the family farmers' fault that commodity prices have collapsed at the same time we have a hungry world. Hundreds of millions of people go to bed with an ache in their belly every night because they do not have enough to eat, while our farmers are told their product has no value. And when companies take the farmers product and turn it into cereal by puffing it, then they send it to the grocery store, they say it not only has value, in fact, they are announcing a price increase. Yet, they have received record profits and now want to increase cereal prices.

I want to put up a chart that shows the average annual return on equity for the major cereal manufacturers, 1993 to 1997: 29 percent, 24 percent, 25 percent, 22 percent.

Our family farmers are going broke raising the products that go into these cereals; and the largest corporations that make cereal are making very substantial returns on their equity. There is something wrong with that economic system. Some say, "Well, that's just the way it works. The big get bigger and the small get phased out." If this country decides it is worth losing family farmers, it will have lost something of great value to our country.

Some in this Chamber think having only giant agrifactories around in the future is fine. They will buy up farms

from coast to coast. Only having large farms in America is not fine with me. This country will have taken a giant step backwards, unless we fundamentally change the farm law this year and provide a decent safety net for family farmers. We do it for another segment in our economy. We provide a safety net for workers with a minimum wage.

Family farmers were told, under the current farm bill—about 3 years ago—"We're going to pull the safety net out from under you." And then, of course, prices collapsed, and the result is family farmers have no effective safety net.

I just say that when you look at what is going on in the business page of the newspaper, "Cargill profits from decline in farm prices" and "General Mills to boost cereal prices"—I do not mean to single out these two companies, they are doing what economic clout and power allows them to do—but it is unfair to family farmers.

We have asked for substantial investigations by the Justice Department about the concentration of economic power and what it is doing to the family-sized farm. I hope the Justice Department will move, and move aggressively, on these issues. But more importantly, this Congress needs to decide, in the next few weeks, whether it wants family farmers left in this country. And if it does, we have to do a U-turn on farm policy and reconnect a decent safety net for family-sized farms.

I know what some people say, "Well, all this is wonderful, but it's boring and it's not very important." It is critically important to families out there struggling to make a living.

Will Rogers said, many years ago, "You know, if on one day all the lawyers on Wall Street failed to show up for lunch, it wouldn't mean a thing for this country. But if one day all the cows in our country failed to show up to be milked, that would be a problem." What he was trying to describe was a difference between those who move paper around in America and those who produce real products on the farm, that are of real value and contribute to feeding our country. That admonition by Will Rogers is just as important today.

I hope the Justice Department will take a look at the Cargill-Continental merger with a critical eye, to say, why do we need corporations in this system, already too large, to get bigger? Why do we need them to impose their economic will on small producers? Why do we need to give them more economic clout to do that?

I hope the Justice Department will look at market concentration in meat packing and in a whole range of other areas, because those are the kinds of things that are undermining the foundation of America's family farms.

A number of us will speak at greater length on these issues in the coming days, because we must convince this Congress that we have a responsibility to develop a farm program that works,

one that tells family farmers: "You matter to our future. And we want you to be able to make a decent living if you work hard on the family farm."

INCOME TAXES

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, last Thursday was tax filing day, and we had a number of my colleagues come to the floor of the Senate and talk about taxes. I have yet to meet anybody who likes taxes. I know taxes pay for the cost of civilization. I know we would not have the kind of country we have in this country without taxes. I know that the ability to drive on good roads, to have a police force, to have a fire department, to have a Defense Department, to have safe food through food inspectors, to be able to control our borders—all of those things require the payment of taxes.

But our tax system has become enormously complicated, and it ought to change. I authored, about a year and a half ago, a proposal called the Fair and Simple Shortcut Tax Plan; it is called the FASST Plan.

You want to file your tax return with minimum bother? You want to avoid having to file an income tax return at all? Then this is a plan that will work for you.

It was not too many years ago that the American people, by and large, did not have to file an income tax return because only a small percentage of the American people paid income taxes. About 6 percent of the American people had a requirement to file a tax return. The rest of the people did not. For those who had to file, they had a very thin instruction booklet, just a couple of pages.

Now we have an instruction booklet with our income tax return that looks very much like a J.C. Penney's catalog. We have moved dramatically in the wrong direction with a highly complicated federal income tax system. Taxpayers are spending more than 3 billion hours at a cost of some \$75 billion in trying to comply with our federal income tax laws every year; and it need not be that way.

We have had people come to the floor of the Senate to say, "I have a better idea. Let's abolish the whole federal income tax." I would like to know what they want to put in its place before abolishing it. Others say, "Let's have a flat tax so that the person making \$30,000 a year can pay the same tax rate as Ross Perot or Donald Trump pay." I do not happen to share that belief.

Still some others say, "Let's have a national sales tax; get rid of the income tax and put a national sales tax on everything." I don't know how much you would like to buy a home and discover you have to pay a 35 percent sales tax on the value of the home. Or if that is the first thing you would exempt, how much higher would the national sales tax rate increase in order to get the required money to make the difference?