

Most importantly, America's veterans must demand it. Veterans need to hear the call one more time.

Together we can restore the funds and keep our covenant with the veteran.

Mr. President, today the Vice President announced that the White House is going to be asking for another \$1 billion. Veterans organizations last week—I thank them—came together with us and presented this data. We said there are huge problems in the country; a lot of veterans aren't going to get the care they need and the care that they deserve.

The Vice President stated the White House is going to ask for an additional \$1 billion. I thank the Vice President for his announcement. That helps. However, we are going to have to do a lot better. That still leaves us with a \$2 billion shortfall. To my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and to the White House and to the Vice President, I say that the veterans community is organizing. It is good grassroots politics. They are going to hold us all accountable. We will have to do a lot better.

STOP WORSENING REPRESSION IN BURMA

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I want to speak today on the distressing human rights situation in Burma. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN, held their Annual Ministerial Meeting in Singapore this weekend. And this week Secretary Albright will be in Singapore for the ASEAN regional forum and the Post-Ministerial Conference. It is essential that during all of these meetings serious attention is focused on the worsening human rights situation in Burma.

We haven't heard much about Burma in the media recently. There have been no major news events in Burma recently to grab the attention of the world: No Tiananmen Square scale massacres, no Kosovo scale dislocations, no bloody street clashes like we've seen in East Timor or Iran. But in Burma today something equally chilling is proceeding, out of the world's view: A slow, systematic strangling of the democratic opposition. Since last fall, the ruling military regime has detained, threatened and tortured opposition party members in increasing numbers. At least 150 senior members of the opposition National League for Democracy are being held in government detention centers. 3,000 political prisoners are held in Rangoon's notorious Insein prison. The regime has forced or coerced nearly 40,000 others to resign from the opposition party in recent months. In a videotape smuggled out of Burma in April and delivered to the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva, the leader of the National League for Democracy, Aung San Suu Kyi, said government repression had worsened greatly in the past year on a scale "the world has not yet

grasped." She said on the tape: "What we have suffered over the last year is far more than we have suffered over the last six or seven years." According to one Western official, the regime intends to do nothing less than eradicate the opposition "once and for all."

Mr. President, most of this repression takes place quietly, through intimidation, arrests at night and other activities out of the public eye. The Burmese regime carefully controls access to the country for journalists. So we have no video footage of the repression and only scant reporting from a few brave journalists and human rights workers. But just because we cannot see what is going on in Burma does not mean we can ignore it. It is all the more important for us to speak about the situation there and show our support for the forces of democracy and human rights.

In July 1997, when Burma became a full ASEAN member, ASEAN countries claimed that such a move would encourage the regime—the so-called State Peace and Development Council, or SPDC, to improve its human rights record. In fact the opposite has been true. As the Washington Post put it in a recent editorial: "ASEAN's logic was familiar: Engagement with the outside world would persuade Burma's dictators to relax their repressive rule. The verdict on this test case of the engagement theory thus far is clear: The behavior of the thugs who run Burma has worsened, and so has life for most Burmese."

Not only has the SPDC stepped up its repression of the opposition party, the National League for Democracy, it has intensified its campaign of oppression against the country's ethnic minorities. The regime has increased forcible relocation programs in the Karen, Karenni, and Shan States. The use of forced labor in all seven ethnic minority states continues at a high level, and forced portering occurs wherever there are counter-insurgency activities.

Amnesty International has just issued three new reports which describe in compelling detail the harsh, relentless mistreatment of farmers and other civilians of ethnic minority groups in rural areas. Let me read a few brief passages from these excellent, detailed reports:

In February 1999, Amnesty International interviewed recently arrived Shan refugees in Thailand in order to obtain an update on the human rights situation in the central Shan State. The pattern of violations has remained the same, including forced labor and portering, extrajudicial killings, and ill-treatment of villagers. Troops also routinely stole villagers' rice supplies, cattle, and gold, using them to sell or to feed themselves. According to reports, Army officers do not provide their troops with adequate supplies so troops in effect live off the villagers. One 33 year-old farmer from Murngnai township described the relationship between the Shan people and the army:

Before, I learned that the armed forces are supposed to protect people, but they are repressing people. If you can't give them everything they want, they consider you as their enemy . . . it is illogical, the army is forcing the people to protect them, instead of vice-versa.

Amnesty International also reports similar abuses in Karen state:

Karen refugees interviewed in Thailand cited several reasons for leaving their homes: Some had previously been forced out of their villages by the Burmese army and had been hiding in the forest. They feared being shot on sight by the military because they occupied "black areas" where the insurgents were allegedly active. Many others fled directly from their home villages in the face of village burnings, constant demands for forced labor, looting of food and supplies, and extrajudicial killings at the hands of the military.

These human rights violations took place in the context of widespread counter-insurgency activities against the Karen National Union (KNU) one of the last remaining armed ethnic minority opposition groups still fighting the military government. Guerilla fighting between the two groups continues, but the primary victims are Karen civilians. Civilians are at risk of torture and extrajudicial executions by the military, who appear to automatically assume that they supported or were even members of the KNU. Civilians also became sitting targets for constant demands by the army for forced labor or portering duties. As one Karen refugee explained to Amnesty International, "Even though we are civilians, the military treats us like their enemy."

A similar situation exists in Karenni State. Three-quarters of the dozens of Karenni refugees interviewed by Amnesty International in February 1999 were forced by the military to work as unpaid laborers. They were in effect an unwilling pool of laborers which the military drew from to work in military bases, build roads, and clear land. When asked why they decided to flee to Thailand, many refugees said that forced labor duties made it impossible for them to survive and do work to support themselves. Several of them also mentioned that forced labor demands had increased during 1998.

Unpaid forced labor is in contravention of the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Convention No. 29, which the government of Burma signed in 1955. The ILO has repeatedly raised the issue with the government and in June 1996 took the rare step of appointing a Commission of Inquiry. In August 1998 the Commission published a comprehensive report, which found the government of Burma "... guilty of an international crime that is also, if committed in a widespread or systematic manner, a crime against humanity."

Mr. President, I am under no illusion that the military regime in Burma will reform overnight and end its human rights abuses. But I think it is critically important that we keep the

world's attention focused on the terrible repression of democracy and abuse of ethnic minorities going on there. I hope our message of concern, backed by the invaluable reporting done by Amnesty International, will get through somehow to the Burmese people and to their courageous leader, Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

ASEAN member countries are gathering in Singapore currently for a series of meetings. We need to encourage them to develop a new strategy for dealing with the SPDC's intransigence regarding human rights. Now that criticism of fellow ASEAN members is no longer completely taboo, I hope some of the ASEAN countries that have improved their own human rights records will take the initiative to prod the Burmese to move in the right direction. The ASEAN regional forum (ARF), which deals with Asian security issues, will meet at the same time and should address this as a security problem. Western nations, including the U.S., who will also be present at the ARF should work closely with all concerned countries to encourage the SPDC to improve its human rights record.

Even if we don't see quick improvement, those of us who care deeply about human rights have a duty to keep the plight of the Burmese people before the world community. I am committed to doing that, and I hope my colleagues will join me in pressing the Burmese regime for real, measurable improvements in these areas.

RESTORATION OF THE ENFORCEMENT OF RULE XVI—Continued

Mr. REID addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I express my appreciation for the statement of the Senator from Minnesota regarding the rule change in his usual deliberate style.

I yield 5 minutes to the Senator from Maryland.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland is recognized.

Mr. SARBANES. Mr. President, I rise to speak to the resolution that will be before us for a vote at the end of the afternoon, S. Res. 160, to restore enforcement of rule XVI.

Mr. President, I believe in the Senate as an institution. I think it is an important part of the workings of our democracy that the Senate carry out its duties and responsibilities in a way that it has done throughout the more than 200-year history of our Republic.

In a sense, this is a difficult issue for me because I voted not to waive rule XVI, or, in effect, not to overrule the ruling of the Chair, at the time the ruling was made. That, of course, was a motion offered by my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. I thought, well, we really should not change the way we do business. But what has happened since that time is, increasingly, that

the minority has been really frustrated by the lack of opportunity to come to the floor of the Senate to offer its positions, to have them considered and voted upon. Therefore, I am going to vote against this resolution when it comes to a vote this afternoon simply, among other things, to make a very strong statement of protest against the procedures that are now being followed in the Senate, which are effectively preventing us from considering important issues.

Now, repeatedly, we have had a situation in which the majority leader, once a measure is offered, fills up the amendment tree by gaining first recognition, which is the majority leader's entitlement under our process, and then the minority has no opportunity to offer its proposals. I ask the minority whip and the assistant minority leader, isn't it the case that time and time again we have simply been blocked out from even putting an issue before the Senate? I am not complaining about being blocked out if we then go to a vote on it—well, I would complain, but you decide these things by majority vote. We are even being precluded from offering amendments in order to have positions considered; is that not correct?

Mr. REID. That is absolutely true. For example, on the issue of the lockbox, cloture has been filed three to five times. We have never uttered a single word in a debate about that issue. We have never had the opportunity to offer a single amendment. We agree with the lockbox concept, but does it have to be theirs? Can't we try to change it a little bit?

Mr. SARBANES. As I understand it, the way that has been structured now, the minority is totally precluded from offering any alternative proposal or any different proposal because they have completely blocked us out from offering any amendments; isn't that correct?

Mr. REID. That is absolutely true. I ask my friends, are they so afraid of discussing an issue, and are they so afraid they will lose a couple of Members and we will be right? Is that the problem? I don't know. Why won't they let us at least offer an amendment?

Mr. SARBANES. It raises this question in a democracy: What happens when you can't pose issues and have them debated and voted upon?

It seems to me an elementary way of proceeding. Traditionally, the Senate has always offered that opportunity, as a matter of fact. I have been in this body a long time and I can recall when, not too long ago, we were in the majority, and even earlier when that was the case, when the Senate was essentially run in a way that enabled Members to bring up proposals and have them considered and voted upon. It by no means guaranteed that your proposal was going to prevail; You might lose, and that was obvious. But that is part and parcel of the democratic process. But not to even be able to offer your

amendments—and, of course, this resolution would, in effect, limit down the opportunities as well.

Essentially, if you had a Senate that was operating in the traditional way, you could offer your proposals. That sort of limitation is one that we traditionally lived with. But this was lifted by the majority, and at the same time they did this, subsequently, they have increasingly developed other ways of blocking the minority out from simply laying their positions before the Senate for consideration. Is that not the case?

Mr. REID. It is absolutely the case. The fact is that all we want is to be treated like the Senate. My friend from Maryland served in the House of Representatives, as I did. That is a huge body, 435 Members. They need specific rules—and they have always had them—to move legislation along. You can't have unlimited debate in that body. But the Senate was set up differently. We do not need, or should we have, a rule on every piece of legislation that comes through, as does the House of Representatives. Does the Senator agree?

Mr. SARBANES. I agree completely with that. In fact, even in the House the procedure has gotten so rigid that there is significant complaint that they do not have an opportunity when important measures are before—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time of the minority has expired, with the exception of 15 minutes that was reserved.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, since nobody is on the floor, I ask unanimous consent that we be allowed to continue for 10 minutes.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I say to my friend, in responding to the question asked, with his experience in the House and in the Senate, can he tell us how he believes the Senate should be treated differently than the House of Representatives.

Mr. SARBANES. Well, the thing that struck me when I came to the Senate from the House was, in a sense, how much more wide open the Senate was in terms of considering proposals of the Members of the Senate. In the House, of course, you have title rules. You adopt a rule, and that limits the amendments that can be offered. We even had the so-called closed rule in which no amendment could be offered. You either had to vote up or down on the measure that was reported by the committee to the floor of the House. But usually you would get a rule that would perhaps give the minority an opportunity to offer a couple of amendments. One came to the Senate and discovered that both the majority and minority Members had much more of an opportunity to have amendments offered by the body and considered and voted upon.

Of course, in order to control that procedure, we had a rule that you could