

the table and not just talk about what they are not for but start talking about the solutions that can make a difference in the quality, accessibility, affordability, and health care for the people of the United States of America.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### WORLD FOOD CRISIS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the world is facing a global food crisis, and it is growing worse by the day. Each morning, we see a new front-page headline reminding us of the urgency of the situation. It threatens not only the health and survival of millions of poor people around the globe, many of them children, but it also threatens the stability of governments in some parts of the world where hunger and food shortages are most acute. It threatens global security and even our own national security.

The world food crisis is a human catastrophe. Families are suffering. Mothers and fathers are struggling to feed their children. A recent New York Times story described a father in Haiti's capital city, Port-au-Prince, whose children had recently eaten only two spoonfuls of rice apiece one day and nothing the next day. The father said in this interview:

They look at me and say, "Papa, I'm hungry," and I have to look away. It is humiliating. It makes you angry.

Three-quarters of the people in Haiti live on less than \$2 a day, and one in five children is chronically malnourished. People are desperate for nourishment of any kind.

The New York Times story went on to say that one booming business amid all the gloom is the selling of patties made of mud, oil, and sugar, typically eaten by the most destitute.

One Haitian man said:

It's salty and it has butter, and you don't know you are eating dirt. It makes your stomach quiet down.

Mr. President, I said last week that we were on the brink of a humanitarian crisis, and I am afraid we have crossed that threshold. We are now witnessing that humanitarian crisis. World Bank data shows global food prices have jumped 83 percent in the last 3 years. These are the average commodity prices paid by the non-governmental organization CARE.

CARE is known around the world. CARE packages, after World War II, became a symbol of American caring and a symbol of international compassion. CARE is paying more and more for the food they buy. In just a brief period of

time—from December 2007 to April 2008—the costs have gone up dramatically in sorghum, in wheat, rice, peas, lentils, and vegetable oil. This chart really tells the story of what has happened in just 4 months. Other data shows wheat prices have tripled in the last 3 years. Poor families in Yemen are spending more than a quarter of their income just to buy bread for their children.

The price of rice has tripled in just the last 18 months. There is even rationing of the sale of rice in the United States. You may have seen the papers this morning. Some major warehouse-type operations are limiting the amount of rice Americans can buy. In Bangladesh, a 2-kilogram bag of rice—a little over 4 pounds—which might feed a small family for a couple of days now consumes about half the daily income of a poor family. In the Philippines, hoarding rice is now punishable by life in prison. In rural El Salvador, the World Food Program estimates that rising food prices have cut the caloric intake of the average meal 40 percent from 2 years ago.

The World Food Program is the food aid branch of the United Nations and the world's largest humanitarian agency. It operates in about 80 nations, providing food to about 90 million poor people a year. Two-thirds of them are kids. Because of rising food prices, the World Food Program can afford to buy only 50 percent of the food for school-children that it could purchase a year ago.

This is the worst global food crisis in more than 30 years, since the Arab oil embargo in the early 1970s caused sharp spikes in world food prices. The blue shaded areas on this map show 36 nations on four continents now facing a growing risk of hunger and the social unrest that comes with it. The flames indicate places where riots or protests are already taking place. It may not be easy for those following this to see, but if you can imagine, almost one-fifth of the world's countries are facing a food crisis, and many more are facing protests and demonstrations. In Africa, 21 countries are unable, for a variety of reasons, to meet their own food needs. In Asia, nine countries are facing food shortages; four Latin American nations; and in Europe, food shortages in Moldova and Chechnya. The list of these countries is here, and it is a long list. It shows you how this is stretching across the world, particularly in the poorer sections.

Aid organizations are seeing these effects on the ground. CARE staff with 20 years' experience in the field say they have never seen a situation this bad, and there are no immediate prospects for relief.

Last week, U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon described the world food situation as having reached emergency proportions. He and World Bank President Robert Zoellick have warned that the food crisis "could mean 7 lost years in the fight against worldwide poverty."

We spend a lot of time on the Senate floor talking about security, especially in the context of Iraq. But security is not won or lost only on the streets of Baghdad or on the battlefields of Afghanistan. Security is at stake in the bread lines of Egypt, the rice markets in Thailand, and the withering cornfields in Zimbabwe. The global food crisis is also a looming security crisis, one that threatens the stability of many already fragile governments. Pockets of fierce protest could trigger outbreaks of sustained violence, even war.

Referring to the same chart, the flames on this map show what has been experienced over the last 16 months in terms of riots and demonstrations.

Haiti and Egypt, two nations where food prices have doubled in the last 2 years, have already seen violent unrest linked to these soaring food prices. Here are photographs of recent food riots, one in Haiti, another in Egypt.

Just a word. I went to Haiti a few years ago with former Senator Mike DeWine of Ohio—my first visit. I had been prodded into going there because I traveled to Asia and Africa, and someone finally said: Why do you travel so far looking for the worst poverty in the world when it is in your backyard, on the island of Haiti? So I went there, to the island of Hispaniola, which has Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and they were right. I had never seen worse poverty anywhere in the world, and it is in our backyard. And now these people are digging through a dump trying to find something to eat in Haiti.

Here, in Egypt, they have two lines of troops holding back a food riot that occurred there.

Haiti recently ousted its Prime Minister after days of violent protest over soaring food prices. Nine thousand U.N. peacekeepers were ordered recently not to fire on civilians as widespread looting and shooting continued.

In Egypt, the Government has had to dispatch riot police to break up food protests. The military has even been put to work baking bread in an effort to prevent even more anger over soaring food prices.

Senegal is regarded as one of Africa's most stable democracies, but even there, rising anger over food prices is directed at the Government. Recent demonstrations in Senegal turned violent as police in riot gear struck and used tear gas against protestors who were protesting for food.

Parts of India were enduring riots over the high cost of rice as far back as 6 months ago.

Recent history reminds us how closely our security is linked to the security of these farflung places. Sending help in the form of food aid to these countries whose people are starving is clearly the right thing to do, but it is also the smart thing to do. If we stand by and watch these violent uprisings cause governments to fall, this growing crisis will pose a threat to the security of the United States of America.

Surveys by Pew Research show favorable opinions of America suffered steep declines since 2000, and not just among old enemies but among recent allies: in Great Britain, from 83 percent favorable toward the United States down to 56 percent in 2006; in Germany, from 67 percent to 37 percent; in Indonesia, from 75 percent to 30 percent; in Turkey, from 52 percent to 12 percent; and in Jordan, which we consider to be an ally and friend, only 15 percent of the people have a favorable opinion of our Nation. Yet amid these troubling numbers, the study also showed moments of improved attitudes toward America, generated by U.S. aid for tsunami victims in Indonesia and elsewhere.

We need to take heed that some countries in the world that share our values and have common goals in life think little of our country. They are wrong. They don't understand our values. They don't understand who we are. We have a chance to help them understand by coming to the aid of those living in poverty and those facing starvation and deprivation around the world.

The causes of today's soaring global food prices and food shortages are many, they are complicated, and they are interrelated. For the sake of world security, more work is needed to understand these causes and develop long-term solutions to feed a hungry world. But we cannot wait for comprehensive solutions to start dealing with today's crises. We need to focus on what we can do at this moment. We need to put an end to this emergency.

The Department of Agriculture announced last week that it will release \$200 million in commodities from the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust. Bill was a friend of mine. He always had a soft spot in his heart for these programs, and I am glad this one is named after him. Mr. President, \$200 million is an important step that will help, but it is not enough.

Last week, I met with Josette Sheeran. She runs the World Food Program. What a tough assignment at this moment in history. She says they are at least \$755 million short of what is needed to respond to this global crisis. Beginning next month, for lack of money, the World Food Program may be forced to suspend its school feeding programs in Cambodia. This last chart shows women in a small village in India reaching out desperately for rice sold by Government officials. "The world's misery index is rising" as a result of the food crisis, Josette Sheeran of the World Food Program said last week.

Senators BIDEN and KERRY have joined me in asking the White House for \$550 million for this global food crisis. I have joined Senator BOB CASEY and others in asking the Appropriations Committee in the Senate to provide this help in the supplemental funding bill which we will be considering very soon.

Other countries are rising to the challenge. Last week, France an-

nounced an additional \$100 million; the UK pledged \$60 million; and Norway, \$20 million. Such contributions are important.

Another important step would be for the United States and donor nations to allow a percentage of food aid to be purchased in local food products. It may be that the food is there and if purchased can be given to the people rather than delaying the delivery by shipping things from faraway destinations. I urge my colleagues to support this request.

For those who say \$550 million is just too much to spend to avoid global shortages and unrest, I remind them that is just about what we spend in 1 day in the war in Iraq—1 day. We are talking about the amount of money needed to try to avert a global food crisis.

A little over a week ago, the world's economic ministers met here in Washington to discuss the state of the world economy. They declared that food shortages and skyrocketing prices posed potentially greater threats to economic stability than the turmoil in capital markets. They called on wealthier nations to help prevent starvation and disorder.

We have a choice. We can stand back and watch this disaster unfold or we can demonstrate to the world what we stand for. We can show the world that we understand hunger and violent unrest are also forms of tyranny and terrorism and we are committed, the United States, to doing our part to help end them.

This is not charity. International food assistance in the face of the global food crisis is the right thing to do, the smart thing to do, and the American thing to do.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following my remarks, the April 18, 2008, article from the New York Times as well as the April 22, 2008, article from the Irish Times be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the New York Times, Apr. 18, 2008]

ACROSS GLOBE, EMPTY BELLIES BRING RISING ANGER

(By Marc Lacey)

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI.—Hunger bashed in the front gate of Haiti's presidential palace. Hunger poured onto the streets, burning tires and taking on soldiers and the police. Hunger sent the country's prime minister packing.

Haiti's hunger, that burn in the belly that so many here feel, has become fiercer than ever in recent days as global food prices spiral out of reach, spiking as much as 45 percent since the end of 2006 and turning Haitian staples like beans, corn and rice into closely guarded treasures.

Saint Louis Meriska's children ate two spoonfuls of rice apiece as their only meal recently and then went without any food the following day. His eyes downcast, his own stomach empty, the unemployed father said forlornly, "They look at me and say, 'Papa, I'm hungry,' and I have to look away. It's humiliating and it makes you angry."

That anger is palpable across the globe. The food crisis is not only being felt among the poor but is also eroding the gains of the working and middle classes, sowing volatile levels of discontent and putting new pressures on fragile governments.

In Cairo, the military is being put to work baking bread as rising food prices threaten to become the spark that ignites wider anger at a repressive government. In Burkina Faso and other parts of sub-Saharan Africa, food riots are breaking out as never before. In reasonably prosperous Malaysia, the ruling coalition was nearly ousted by voters who cited food and fuel price increases as their main concerns.

"It's the worst crisis of its kind in more than 30 years," said Jeffrey D. Sachs, the economist and special adviser to the United Nations secretary general, Ban Ki-moon. "It's a big deal and it's obviously threatening a lot of governments. There are a number of governments on the ropes, and I think there's more political fallout to come."

Indeed, as it roils developing nations, the spike in commodity prices—the biggest since the Nixon administration—has pitted the globe's poorer south against the relatively wealthy north, adding to demands for reform of rich nations' farm and environmental policies. But experts say there are few quick fixes to a crisis tied to so many factors, from strong demand for food from emerging economies like China's to rising oil prices to the diversion of food resources to make biofuels.

There are no scripts on how to handle the crisis, either. In Asia, governments are putting in place measures to limit hoarding of rice after some shoppers panicked at price increases and bought up everything they could.

Even in Thailand, which produces 10 million more tons of rice than it consumes and is the world's largest rice exporter, supermarkets have placed signs limiting the amount of rice shoppers are allowed to purchase.

But there is also plenty of nervousness and confusion about how best to proceed and just how bad the impact may ultimately be, particularly as already strapped governments struggle to keep up their food subsidies.

#### SCANDALOUS STORM

"This is a perfect storm," President Elias Antonio Saca of El Salvador said Wednesday at the World Economic Forum on Latin America in Cancun, Mexico. "How long can we withstand the situation? We have to feed our people, and commodities are becoming scarce. This scandalous storm might become a hurricane that could upset not only our economies but also the stability of our countries."

In Asia, if Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi of Malaysia steps down, which is looking increasingly likely amid post-election turmoil within his party, he may be that region's first high-profile political casualty of fuel and food price inflation.

In Indonesia, fearing protests, the government recently revised its 2008 budget, increasing the amount it will spend on food subsidies by about \$280 million.

"The biggest concern is food riots," said H.S. Dillon, a former adviser to Indonesia's Ministry of Agriculture. Referring to small but widespread protests touched off by a rise in soybean prices in January, he said, "It has happened in the past and can happen again."

Last month in Senegal, one of Africa's oldest and most stable democracies, police in riot gear beat and used tear gas against people protesting high food prices and later raided a television station that broadcast images of the event. Many Senegalese have expressed anger at President Abdoulaye

Wade for spending lavishly on roads and five-star hotels for an Islamic summit meeting last month while many people are unable to afford rice or fish.

"Why are these riots happening?" asked Arif Husain, senior food security analyst at the World Food Program, which has issued urgent appeals for donations. "The human instinct is to survive, and people are going to do no matter what to survive. And if you're hungry you get angry quicker."

Leaders who ignore the rage do so at their own risk. President René Préval of Haiti appeared to taunt the populace as the chorus of complaints about *la vie chère*—the expensive life—grew. He said if Haitians could afford cellphones, which many do carry, they should be able to feed their families. "If there is a protest against the rising prices," he said, "come get me at the palace and I will demonstrate with you."

When they came, filled with rage and by the thousands, he huddled inside and his presidential guards, with United Nations peacekeeping troops, rebuffed them. Within days, opposition lawmakers had voted out Mr. Préval's prime minister, Jacques-Édouard Alexis, forcing him to reconstitute his government. Fragile in even the best of times, Haiti's population and politics are now both simmering.

"Why were we surprised?" asked Patrick Èlie, a Haitian political activist who followed the food riots in Africa earlier in the year and feared they might come to Haiti. "When something is coming your way all the way from Burkina Faso you should see it coming. What we had was like a can of gasoline that the government left for someone to light a match to it."

#### DWINDLING MENUS

The rising prices are altering menus, and not for the better. In India, people are scrimping on milk for their children. Daily bowls of dal are getting thinner, as a bag of lentils is stretched across a few more meals.

Maninder Chand, an auto-rickshaw driver in New Delhi, said his family had given up eating meat altogether for the last several weeks.

Another rickshaw driver, Ravinder Kumar Gupta, said his wife had stopped seasoning their daily lentils, their chief source of protein, with the usual onion and spices because the price of cooking oil was now out of reach. These days, they eat bowls of watery, tasteless dal, seasoned only with salt.

Down Cairo's Hafziyah Street, peddlers selling food from behind wood carts bark out their prices. But few customers can afford their fish or chicken, which bake in the hot sun. Food prices have doubled in two months.

Ahmed Abul Gheit, 25, sat on a cheap, stained wooden chair by his own pile of rotting tomatoes. "We can't even find food," he said, looking over at his friend Sobhy Abdullah, 50. Then raising his hands toward the sky, as if in prayer, he said, "May God take the guy I have in mind."

Mr. Abdullah nodded, knowing full well that the "guy" was President Hosni Mubarak.

The government's ability to address the crisis is limited, however. It already spends more on subsidies, including gasoline and bread, than on education and health combined.

"If all the people rise, then the government will resolve this," said Raisa Fikry, 50, whose husband receives a pension equal to about \$83 a month, as she shopped for vegetables. "But everyone has to rise together. People get scared. But we will all have to rise together."

It is the kind of talk that has prompted the government to treat its economic woes as a

security threat, dispatching riot forces with a strict warning that anyone who takes to the streets will be dealt with harshly.

Niger does not need to be reminded that hungry citizens overthrow governments. The country's first postcolonial president, Hamani Diori, was toppled amid allegations of rampant corruption in 1974 as millions starved during a drought.

More recently, in 2005, it was mass protests in Niamey, the Nigerien capital, that made the government sit up and take notice of that year's food crisis, which was caused by a complex mix of poor rains, locust infestation and market manipulation by traders.

"As a result of that experience the government created a cabinet-level ministry to deal with the high cost of living," said Moustapha Kadi, an activist who helped organize marches in 2005. "So when prices went up this year the government acted quickly to remove tariffs on rice, which everyone eats. That quick action has kept people from taking to the streets."

#### THE POOR EAT MUD

In Haiti, where three-quarters of the population earns less than \$2 a day and one in five children is chronically malnourished, the one business booming amid all the gloom is the selling of patties made of mud, oil and sugar, typically consumed only by the most destitute.

"It's salty and it has butter and you don't know you're eating dirt," said Olwich Louis Jeune, 24, who has taken to eating them more often in recent months. "It makes your stomach quiet down."

But the grumbling in Haiti these days is no longer confined to the stomach. It is now spray-painted on walls of the capital and shouted by demonstrators.

In recent days, Mr. Préval has patched together a response, using international aid money and price reductions by importers to cut the price of a sack of rice by about 15 percent. He has also trimmed the salaries of some top officials. But those are considered temporary measures.

Real solutions will take years. Haiti, its agriculture industry in shambles, needs to better feed itself. Outside investment is the key, although that requires stability, not the sort of widespread looting and violence that the Haitian food riots have fostered.

Meanwhile, most of the poorest of the poor suffer silently, too weak for activism or too busy raising the next generation of hungry. In the sprawling slum of Haiti's Cité Soleil, Placide Simone, 29, offered one of her five offspring to a stranger. "Take one," she said, cradling a listless baby and motioning toward four rail-thin toddlers, none of whom had eaten that day. "You pick. Just feed them."

[From the Irish Times, Apr. 22, 2008]

#### CLIMATE CHANGE DEVASTATION GIVES FOOD FOR THOUGHT ON EARTH DAY

(By Fr. Seán McDonagh)

Tuesday, April 22nd, is Earth Day. Unfortunately, there is very little to celebrate this year, as the devastation of the Earth is increasing at an extraordinary rate and, in many countries, the poor are feeling the pain of hunger and starvation.

The major culprit this year is climate change. Droughts in various parts of the world, especially Australia, have cut food supplies and the rush to grow biofuels leaves less land on which to grow food. As a result food prices have jumped dramatically during the year. Maize is up 31 per cent, rice has increased by 74 per cent, soya is up 87 per cent, and wheat is now 130 per cent dearer than it was last year.

In recent years, concerns about global warming and the end of the oil era convinced

many people that growing energy crops might be a good idea. In the U.S. the production of ethanol from plant matter increased by a factor of five in the past decade. Policy decisions taken this year will lead to a further five-fold increase. Europe is also boosting biofuel production and attempting to source it from various parts of the world.

The speed at which these changes are taking place can be seen from a glance at investment in biofuels. In 1995 it was a mere \$5 billion. A decade later it had jumped to \$38 billion, and is expected to top \$100 billion (€63 billion) by 2010.

Sorry to say the biofuel boom is a classic example of the paradox of conscious purpose. This means that we often achieve the very opposite result to the one we intended. In both southeast Asia and South America, growing biofuel crops has led to massive destruction of the rainforest. In Brazil, for example, more than 302,514 hectares were destroyed in the second half of 2007. One of the main reasons for this is the pressure to grow more soya.

In Malaysia and Indonesia producing biofuels from palm oil will increase the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere, because the preferred way of clearing the forest is by burning it. This final destruction of the forest will lead to the extinction of countless species of plant, animal, reptile and bird life.

Global food supplies are also at a very low ebb. The last time the U.S.'s grain silos were so empty was in the early 1970s when President Richard Nixon sold the wheat surplus to the USSR because crop failures there were leading to starvation. The U.S. recently told the World Food Programme to expect a 40 per cent increase in the price of food in 2008.

Less food and dearer food has led to riots around the world. In Morocco, 34 people were arrested in January 2008 for taking part in riots over food prices. The situation in Egypt is worse. In a 12-month period up to March 2008, the price of cereals and bread had increased in Egypt by 48.1 per cent, according to Egypt's Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics. The price of cooking oil rose by 45.2 per cent. Because of these increases, the Egyptian government has relaxed the rules on who is eligible for food aid. This has led to tensions and, if the situation continues, could destabilise the government.

The same is true in Pakistan. Meanwhile, at least four people were killed and 20 wounded when demonstrations against rising food prices turned into riots in southern Haiti.

My colleagues in the Philippines tell me that both the price of rice and insecure supplies of the cereal could do much more to destabilise the government of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo than coup plotters or even charges of gross corruption. All in all there is little to celebrate on Earth Day, 2008.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

#### GLOBAL YOUTH SERVICE DAY

Mrs. DOLE. Madam President, I rise today in support of the 20th Annual Global Youth Service Day. This event, the largest service event in the world, celebrates the contributions of young people to better their community, country and world through voluntarism. The day also celebrates contributions by the community, including the