not want to believe that my worth could be diminished by the color of my skin. Wasn't it possible that Cadet Capron was simply better than Cadet Powell?

Then he goes on to talk about his experience upon leaving Fort Bragg, about not being able to go to the same church and sit in the same pew with his white colleagues, not being able to go into the same bathrooms in order to relieve himself on the way back, not being able to sit at the same counter to enjoy a meal, notwithstanding the fact that he might have to fight and die in the same trenches as his white colleagues.

I want to conclude my comments about Colin Powell with a reference that he made and that I think applies to what I am talking about as far as Ron Brown is concerned.

He said:

Racism was still relatively new to me, and I had to find a way to cope psychologically. I began by identifying my priorities. I wanted, above all, to succeed at my Army career. I did not intend to give way to self-destructive rage, no matter how provoked. If people in the South insisted on living by crazy rules, then I would play the hand dealt me for now. If I was to be confined to one end of the playing field, then I was going to be a star on that part of the field. Nothing that happened off-post, none of the indignities, none of the injustices, was going to inhibit my performance. I was not going to let myself become emotionally crippled because I could not play on the whole field. I did not feel inferior, and I was not going to let anybody make me believe I was. I was not going to allow someone else's feelings about me to become my feelings about myself. Racism was not just a black problem. It was America's problem. And until the country solved it, I was not going to let bigotry make me a victim instead of a full human being. I occasionally felt hurt; I felt anger; but most of all I felt challenged, I'll show you!

That is precisely what Ron Brown's life was all about. It is what he did his entire life—take any portion of the field and be the best in that field, be twice as good as the competition. He did it with grace and humor and a great sense of humanity.

I recall when he was named to be the chairman of the DNC. I see my colleague from Arkansas who is here. When he was first proposed to be chairman of the Democratic National Committee, there were some people who worried about that. ''Wait a minute. We're going to name a black man to be chairman of the Democratic National Committee? What's going to happen to our white base in the South?'' But Ron Brown built bridges. There are some people in our country who want to put up walls around the country. Ron Brown's life was dedicated to seeking the best in people and not exploiting the worst. He possessed such an abundance of humanity that he took the time to read to Lee Atwater. When Lee Atwater was dying, it was Ron Brown who went beside his bed and read to him. How many of us have such a generosity of spirit? How many of us, day in and day out, would be capable of going to the other side, to people that we argue and debate with, challenge and fight with over political issues and in their time of torment and need take the time to read to someone who is dying?

After all that he did to get Bill Clinton elected as President, I think he should have been given any choice of any Cabinet position, not because he was black but because he was the best. It did not happen. He was offered the position of Secretary of Commerce. He took what was offered to him and he did what? He did exactly what Colin Powell and so many other black Americans have done and had to do throughout history. He became the best on that portion of the field that he was allowed to play on.

Mr. President, I know there are some who would like to abolish the Commerce Department as a symbol of our need to reduce the size of Government in Washington. I could perhaps understand it if Ron Brown were antibusiness. There might be some merit to that. But he was one of the most probusiness Secretaries of Commerce we have ever had. I do not recall our effort to dismantle the Department of Commerce when President Nixon was in office, President Ford, President Reagan, or President Bush. But apparently there is a need to dismantle some offices and agencies, and that is one we settle on.

I do not understand it, but let me just say that I think that Ron Brown will be remembered as one of the finest Secretaries of Commerce we ever had. He was out there the day that he died promoting business on behalf of the United States of America.

I conclude my remarks with a quote taken from Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., something I think applies to Ron Brown:

Through our great good fortune, in our youth our hearts were touched with fire. It was given to us to learn at the outset that life is a profound and passionate thing. While we are permitted to scorn nothing but indifference and do not pretend to undervalue the worldly rewards of ambition, we have seen with our own eyes, beyond and above the gold fields, the snowy heights of honor, and it is for us to bear the report to those who come after us. But, above all, we have learned that whether a man accepts from Fortune her spade, and will look downward and dig, or from Aspiration her axe and cord, and will scale the ice, the one and only success, which it is his to command is to bring to his work a mighty heart.

Ron Brown in whatever capacity—as a lawyer, lobbyist, DNC chairman, Secretary of Commerce—brought to his work a mighty heart. While there are those in our society who would like to point to all the negatives, point to all the deficiencies or character flaws, or the superficial qualities, there are those of us here who believe that Ron Brown's humanity, his courage, his determination to succeed on that portion of the field that he was allowed to play on, brought to his work a mighty heart. I for one am going to miss him deeply.

Mr. BUMPERS. Mr. President, while the Senator from Maine is still on the floor, let me say that his magnificent accolade to our departed brother, Ron Brown, is one of the reasons so many of us are very sad that he has chosen to leave the Senate. Those remarks were eloquent. I hope they were heard by everybody in the Senate on this slow, Friday afternoon.

Senator COHEN has always been in the forefront of issues that really matter, where partisan politics do not have any role. He has, without fail, been a giant in this body. Those remarks prove conclusively that a lot of people are still in this business because public service is a noble calling.

As I say, I do not know of anybody on either side of the aisle that has not expressed profound regret at Senator COHEN's decision to retire at the end of this year. He alluded to the press and how they can very seldom find anything nice to say about a public servant until after they die or retire. Jim Fallows discusses this phenomenon in his book, titled ''Breaking the News: How the Media Undermine American Democracy.'' It is a magnificent book, and I recommend it. Fallows has made a couple of speeches in which he talks about this problem. For example, in the weeks before Ron Brown died, the New York Times editorial page was castigating him and a couple days after he died he was praised on that same editorial page.

I talked to a Senator yesterday afternoon who decided in 1994 not to run again. He said the major newspaper in his State had never said a kind word about him that he could remember until he announced his retirement. He said he then got more accolades over the next 6 months then he had had in his entire public career.

I suppose you could attribute that to human nature. It is a natural thing. It would be nice and it would be gratifying if there was some recognition for a few people who labor in the vineyards year after year because they believe in this democracy and they believe in our political system and they want to operate within it, not like the Freemen of Montana. It would be very helpful if somebody said something nice.

Most of us get enough accolades to keep our ego fueled. But I just want to again say, Mr. President, Senator COHEN and I have teamed up on several causes since we both have been here together. I will miss him greatly. One of the reasons is because of the statesmanship he demonstrated this afternoon.

Mr. President, I think that I can say what I want to say about the gas tax within 10 minutes, but rather than interrupt my remarks, let me ask unanimous consent I be permitted to proceed for such time as I may use.

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

THE GAS TAX

Mr. BUMPERS. Mr. President, if we do not hurry up and get the Presidential race over with, I do not know

what will happen in this country. How Senator DOLE has voted on the gas tax in the past is not relevant to me. What kind of a country my children and grandchildren inherit is.

I happen to strongly disagree with Senator DOLE on repealing the 4.3-cent gasoline tax that we put on—not to build highways but to balance the budget—that fateful August day in 1993. That particular deficit reduction package, in my opinion, is still the hallmark of the Clinton administration, the most responsible thing the President has done, the most courageous thing he has done. When we open our mail each day a certain portion of it is hate mail. Some of it is just plain critical. Some of it is very complimentary. When you get to the hate mail it is always, ''Why don't you people screw up your nerve and make those courageous decisions?''

I have said on the floor of the Senate many times the definition of a courageous decision is an unpopular one. The definition of a courageous vote is an unpopular vote. If it were popular, it would not be courageous. How many times do you see people walk down this aisle and vote, and they look to see how it is going, and it is 50 to 5 or 50 to 10, yeas versus nays, 9 times out of 10, nobody wants to be caught out there with 5 Senators, so they vote yea, too.

In 1993, every Republican Senator voted against that bill, and perhaps this clamor to repeal the gas tax which was part of the deficit reduction package, maybe the Republicans would like to find some justification for the fact that every single one of them voted no on a very courageous deficit reduction package which today, 1996, will give us a $144 billion deficit this year. Before we passed that bill in 1993, we were facing a $290 billion deficit for this year.

I was proud of that vote in 1993. I am proud of it now. I do not intend to take the easy political way out by voting for the repeal of the 4.3-cent gasoline tax. That might gain you applause for about 10 minutes back home, but nobody, so far, has said how we are going to make up this $3 billion-plus in revenue we lose with the repeal of this gas tax. Now, you talk about an easy, popular vote, here is one. You vote to cut that gas tax for the rest of the year, it comes to about $3 billion, and you do not have to figure out where you are going to get the $3 billion. What an easy vote that would be.

I saw in the paper this morning where the House and Senate Armed Services Committees have voted to increase defense spending in 1997 by over $12 billion. Why? Make no bones about it. So they can portray President Clinton as weak on defense. But the question ought to be, ''Weak against whom?'' Who is the enemy that we are going to spend $270 billion next year to defend against? The Soviet Union is gone. Russia is a basket case. The Chinese do not even have antiaircraft missiles on their ships, such ships as they have. That $270 billion, in 1997, will be the equivalent of the amount that our 10 most likely enemies, combined, will spend. It is twice as much as the 5 most likely enemies will spend, including China and Russia.

Mr. President, $12 billion is a lot of money to prove that the President is weak on defense. Why do we not just get on the floor and say, ''You are right, the President is weak on defense; now do not spend the $12 billion''? Or you might say, ''Please tell us the enemy that you are proposing to spend this $12 billion to defend against.''

Now, I do not normally read Charles Krauthammer in the Post, but I read it this morning because it dealt with this gasoline tax, and it was a beautiful article. He hit the nail right on the head. Everybody is looking for a scapegoat. In my 22 years in the Senate, when somebody made a terrible mistake in judgment, or somebody was just plain negligent, if the incident had any political appeal, somebody else could always be counted on to call for a hearing. Congress has to think about this. We have now spent over $30 million on Whitewater, and counting, and the American people are still wondering what it is about.

Now there is going to be a hearing in the House about the fact that the President did not take an affirmative or a negative position on Iran furnishing arms to the Bosnians. I doubt very seriously if there was anybody in the U.S. Senate that did not know it was going on. But it is only now after the fact that we have to have a hearing. We have to investigate this. Why does everybody want to investigate everything? Because that is where the television cameras come. If you hold a hearing in your committee and bring the television cameras in and turn those red lights on, they will keep going forever if they can.

You do not have to be a rocket scientist to know why gas prices are up. They are up because, under the Clean Air Act, we demanded reformulated gasoline so the air would be cleaner, and that costs about a nickel a gallon. We pay it here in Washington, but not in Little Rock because our air was not dirty enough to require us to use reformulated gasoline. What else? The average driver in this country is driving 2,000 miles more per year per car than they did 10 years ago. We have a lot of younger drivers being added to the driver rolls. We are driving bigger cars and more trucks. If you are a yuppie, you have to have a sport utility vehicle. I do not know what those suckers get per mile per gallon, but I know one thing—if you are in the in-crowd, you sure better have a Blazer, or an Explorer or a Cherokee. We took all the speed limits off. Montana does not even have a speed limit.

What else? We had a harsh winter, and we diverted so much of our oil to heating oil instead of gasoline. So our stocks of gasoline were low.

What else? Everybody thought we were going to let Iraq start selling oil on the world markets.

Those are seven reasons the price of gasoline has gone up. As Charles Krauthammer so eloquently said in his column this morning, ''Why has all this happened? How about a wild guess? Because supply is down and demand is up.''

How long will this go on? Who knows? The energy information office says that prices will start down by August. They are down 4 cents where I buy gasoline now from where they were 2 weeks ago. But this is a Presidential year. You have to get what you can when you can get it.

My good friend, the junior Senator from Louisiana, JOHN BREAUX, said that to cut the gasoline tax—that 4.3 cents per gallon—off and think that you are going to do something to relieve this problem is like spitting in the ocean and hoping to make it rise.

Mr. President, if we do this, if this is brought to the floor of the Senate, Senator BRYAN of Nevada and I are going to offer an amendment to raise what we call the CAFE standards. The CAFE standards—for the uninitiated who do not serve on the Energy Committee—are the average miles per gallon that we require the automobile makers to meet. Right now, we have CAFE standards that have given us a 21-mile-per-gallon average of all of our vehicles.

In 1973, when the Arab oil embargo hit, the average car in America got 13 miles per gallon. With Scoop Jackson, who was a great Senator from Washington and chairman of the Energy Committee, we passed the CAFE standards and said to the automobile industry that they have to provide cars that do better. They have to be more fuel efficient. They assured us that they were going to go broke. Every time we ask them to do something, we are assured that they are going to go broke. But that did not influence us much. That is when they thought the little Japanese cars were funny looking and the American people would never buy them. We probably saved their lives by imposing the CAFE standards on them. In any event, it was 13 miles per gallon. In 1990, we achieved 21 miles per gallon, and there it stands today. We have not improved our mileage per gallon one iota in 6 years.

And so Senator BRYAN and I will offer an amendment if this gas tax repeal is debated. We will say forget Presidential politics, forget the grandstanding. Let us do something meaningful. Let us raise the fuel efficiency of all the vehicles in this country. That will actually do something about saving energy.

The U.S. Public Interest Research Group says that if we raised the CAFE standards, which are about 27.5 miles per gallon now for automobiles, a little less than that for trucks, to 45 miles per gallon—which could be done—for automobiles, and 34 miles per gallon for small trucks, in 10 years' time we would save $65 billion.

You think of what that would do to our trade deficit. Everybody knows that the oil we import is the biggest single contributor to our trade deficit and our balance of payments problems. But it is very difficult to pass a CAFE standard because that inconveniences people. It is true, oil company profits were really excessive the first quarter, and the oil companies are taking advantage of these price increases because the demand is high and the supply is low. But is that not the good old American system? Is not supply and demand at the very heart of capitalism?

So, Mr. President, you can never get it perfect. The President wants the cattlemen to get a better shake, and I understand that. This morning I looked at the commodity prices. It is absolutely incredible. Wheat is almost $6 a bushel, soybeans $8 a bushel, corn $4.50 a bushel. And you know what this body did. It voted to do away with the law that made those prices possible and said we are going to pass this freedom-to-farm bill. You can get 85 cents a pound for cotton, $6 for wheat, $4.50 for corn, and we will give you a big fat check on top of that. It is going to cost $21 billion more over the next 7 years.

It is the silliest thing this body has ever done. Even the farmers did not want it. So the cattlemen are having to pay these exorbitant prices for grain, and the supply of cattle is high. You can sell oil out of the strategic petroleum reserve. That is sort of like spitting in the ocean, too. And you can repeal the 4.3-cent-a-gallon tax, which is worth $27 a year to the average car owner in this country, and say the deficit will be up $3 billion more this year, and if we allow it to stay, it will be up by several billion more in the next 2 years.

Everybody wants to vote for the easy, popular things, and if it raises the deficit, so be it. That is just something we talk about. Well, Mr. President, I do not know that anybody wants to filibuster a proposal to repeal that 4.3-cent gas tax, but I hope it will not come up. If it does, I hope the debate will be extended. It would be the height of folly.

Mr. President, the minority leader will be here momentarily, I assume. I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LOTT). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Democratic leader is recognized.

HIGH GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, let me thank the distinguished Senator from Arkansas for an extraordinarily strong statement with regard to gas prices and gas taxes. I do not know that anyone has said it more eloquently and passionately and more compellingly than has the senior Senator from Arkansas. There are, indeed, a number of things we can do if we are serious about addressing high gasoline prices.

The Senator from Arkansas has mentioned again yet another opportunity for us to reduce prices, and that is to find ways with which to make gasoline-powered automobiles, all kinds of vehicles, more efficient. By providing an increase in the CAFE standards, we can, indeed, make gasoline-powered vehicles a lot more efficient—not just gasoline vehicles, but diesel-powered vehicles and all transportation more efficient.

He has taken, as well as the Senator from Nevada, a very strong leadership position in making that happen. So whether or not we take that approach and whether or not we give people across this country the assurance that any tax reduction goes into their pocket, whether we take other approaches, we will have the opportunity to debate it. But I think there is a clear, clear choice here. We can bail out the oil companies, as some have suggested, or we can help consumers and taxpayers. If we really want to help consumers and taxpayers, we are going to make vehicles more efficient and we are going to ensure that whatever relief we offer goes in the pockets of consumers, and not into the pockets of the oil companies.

So we will have that opportunity perhaps as early as next week. I hope next week we can work out an arrangement that will allow us to address the real issue here, and that is, how can we address the economic stagnation that so many working families are feeling. Working families are not getting their share of the benefit of the economy in part because they are not seeing increases in wages, in part because they are not getting the kind of health benefits they deserve, in part because they do not have the pension security that they so badly need. And so we will have an opportunity to address those issues in the coming days and hopefully resolve them successfully.

SENATE ISSUES

LIVESTOCK PRICES

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I come to the floor to make a couple of remarks. It was not my intention to come back to the floor, having spoken a little bit earlier today, but I wish to make three points. The first has to do with the issue raised by the distinguished majority leader about livestock prices. He mentioned that the market is responding, and I am very hopeful that it will continue to respond to the actions taken this week.

There is no one more responsible for the fact that those actions have been extraordinarily beneficial to cattle producers across this country than the President himself. The President and I discussed, as he did with other Senators, the possibility of holding a livestock meeting last weekend. We held that meeting Tuesday afternoon, and as early as Wednesday morning the livestock markets began to respond. They responded Wednesday, they responded Thursday, and now they have responded again today. We have seen about a 12- to 14-percent increase in livestock prices in the futures markets directly as a result of the actions taken by the White House, by this President on Tuesday afternoon.

The President is limited, of course, in the actions he can take unilaterally, but he has, in my view, pulled out virtually every stop to ensure that those prices go up. He is going to do all he can within his power and authority, both internationally and domestically. So I applaud him for the actions he has taken.

Hopefully, we will have the opportunity here on the Senate floor to provide him with additional authority. There is $300 million sitting without the prospect of any utilization this year in the Export Enhancement Program. That money could be directed toward livestock and other markets abroad. It will take legislative authority, and we will provide our colleagues with an opportunity to vote on that Export Enhancement Program in the future.

Clearly, we have to respond. Prices in real terms are as low as they were in the 1930's, and the more we do, the more action we can take both in the short and the long terms, the more we can send as clear a message to the markets as possible that we want to work with those in the livestock industry to ensure a stable price, to ensure longer term viability, to ensure that we do not find ourselves in a disaster situation in the weeks and months ahead if we can avoid it.

So I applaud the President in his actions on Tuesday. It was he and the Secretary of Agriculture, of course, who formed the livestock concentration commission that, in our view, could also be very beneficial in providing some guidance on how we deal with those markets more effectively. When three corporations control more than 80 percent of the livestock market, we should not be surprised that prices are as volatile and certainly as difficult to bear for thousands of producers across the country as they are today.

So we will wait with some confidence that the commission will make recommendations that also could be very beneficial, beginning in early June.

THE MINIMUM WAGE

The second point I want to raise this afternoon has to do with the procedural situation we face yet again on the Senate floor. We will be taking up a bill that I think will probably enjoy pretty broad support. Frankly, I am disappointed once again that the so-called parliamentary trees have been filled in an effort to preclude Senators from offering other amendments.