years ago to be home in Wyoming and wonder what is going on in Washington? I suppose there was some comfort in that, as a matter of fact, but, nevertheless, it is quite different than what we have now. We have now the greatest opportunity in history for people to know what is happening and to know instantly what is happening. If a decision is made in Israel this morning, minutes later, the whole world, of course, is familiar with it.

Unfortunately, the same technology that has provided us the opportunity to know so much more has accommodated and, in fact, I suppose, engendered some of the changes that are taking place in terms of the promotion of ideas and our method of governance.

Unfortunately, spinning, promotion, and media hype have replaced real debate based on the issues, and that is too bad. It seems to me that this administration and, I must say, my friends in the minority, have perfected the idea that success is not policy or success is not finishing the job; success is having an opportunity to spin an issue on the evening news; success is getting coverage on the 5 o'clock national report. If polls indicate there is an issue out there in which people are interested and it is currently being discussed, this administration is quick to describe the problem and promise a Federal solution with lots of Federal money—''We'll fix it for you.''

Often there is no plan presented to deal with the problem. There is generally no real proposal to implement, nothing is laid before the Congress. Frankly, there is really no expectation that anything is going to happen; that the idea is, ''Here's the problem, here's what the polls have said; we'll fix it.'' And if you don't agree with that, suddenly you are out of step with the world. So success is measured in media rather than solutions. Unfortunately, I think we see more and more of that.

It is interesting to me, because, depending upon your point of view about government, there are problems and there are appropriate ways to fix them and appropriate ways to deal with them. Of course, it is true that people have different views about that. There are those who believe the Federal Government ought to be the primary fixer of whatever the problem. That is a legitimate liberal view. There are those who believe that it is more likely to find satisfactory solutions if you go to the State, the local government, or the private sector. That, I guess, is a more conservative view. But more important than the philosophy, I think it is appropriate that when you have something you want to deal with, we ought to talk a little bit about where it can most appropriately be fixed.

Should it be done at the Federal Government level? Should it be the kind of program that is one size fits all? I am very sensitive about that, I suppose, being from Wyoming. We are the smallest, population-wise, State in this country. So things that work in Pennsylvania, things that work in New York, do not necessarily work in Wyoming or Nevada or Kansas. So we are better off, in many instances, to say, ''Wait a minute. This service can better be delivered on the basis of a State solution, although the politics of it is, 'Let's get on TV and say we'll fix it for you,'" even with no expectation of having it happen.

So I think we are finding more and more of that. And it just seems to me that it is something we ought to really evaluate, this idea that we watch the polls, find an issue, go to the TV, say we will fix it, and then beat up on everybody who really does not agree with that, without having any genuine—genuine—debate or discussion or analysis of how we best deal with the problem and where it works.

Generally, these are things that are done certainly in a broad context. Everyone cares about children, so if you have a proposal on children—and to suggest that we do not is offensive to me. Everybody cares about child care, but where is it best dealt with? Everybody cares about health care. Where is it best provided? Everybody cares about secondary and elementary education. Where do we best deal with it? It is not enough just to say, ''We've got a problem. I want 100,000 teachers; I want the Federal Government to pay for it. It will become a mandatory program, and we have more and more Federal control.''

Those are the debates. Those are the debates. I guess it troubles me because we sort of trivialize governance with this business of applying the media technique. I understand that the minority—and Republicans have been in the minority, of course. For the minority it is easier to make proposals. It is easier to throw stones and things because you do not have the responsibility to finish it up.

So it is, I think, an interesting kind of thing and one that I believe has some bearing on us really solving problems here. I think it is something we all ought to give some consideration to so that we begin to say to ourselves, ''Here's the problem. How do we best resolve it?'' not just ''How do we get the best 5 o'clock news out of it?'' Success should not be how much media coverage; success ought to be dealing with the problem, trying to resolve it with real debate, real desire to put it where it belongs. Many problems are best solved in the private sector, best solved in State and local government, best solved—some—by the Federal Government. And those are the decisions that we should make.

So, Mr. President, as we move forward I hope that we do maintain the elements of democracy. I have had the occasion, being chairman of a subcommittee on Foreign Relations, to go some places where they do not have democracy. And obviously the things that keep them from that is not having a constitutional government to which people can adhere and a rule of law which enforces it, an opportunity for people to voice their opinions and an opportunity for people to be informed as they form these opinions. These are the things that I think are important to our democracy and I am very interested in maintaining.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. BENNETT addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The distinguished Senator from Utah is recognized.

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, am I correct that I am recognized by previous order for 15 minutes?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. BENNETT. I thank the Chair.

THE Y2K PROBLEM

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, I rise because this is an anniversary date, not an anniversary of something that happened in the past but an anniversary of something that is going to happen in the future. This is an anniversary that is counting backwards. Depending on how you count it, this is either day No. 599 or day No. 600; 599 to the 31st of December, 1999, or 600 days prior to January 1, 2000—the day of the great New Year's Eve party that everybody is reserving their time for in Times Square, in the various hotels in New York. But it is also a day that we need to look forward to with some concern because of what has come to be known as the millennium bug, the year 2000 problem, or, as the computer people abbreviate it, Y2K.

I used the phrase ''Y2K,'' and my wife said, ''What are you talking about? What does it stand for?'' Well, the ''Y'' stands for ''year;'' ''2'' and ''K,'' for ''kilo'' or 1,000 years—2,000—so it shortens it. Call it Y2K. She stopped and thought about it a minute, and she said, ''Y2K or year 2000, you only save one syllable. What's the point?'' Nevertheless, that is what it has come to be known as.

As the chairman of the newly created committee dealing with this challenge here in the Senate, I want to take this anniversary date to bring the Senate and any who are listening over C–SPAN out in the country as a whole up to date on where we are with the Y2K problem.

First, let me outline the dimensions of the problem. A lot of people say, ''Oh, yes; we understand it. It is simply that computers are geared to handle the date with two digits instead of four.'' So 1998 would be in the computer as ''98'' instead of ''1998.'' And that means when you get to the year 2000, the ''00'' to the computer means ''1900'' because the ''19'' is assumed in advance.

Actually, it is more serious than that. There are three areas of concern about Y2K.

The first one, of course, is the software concern that I have already mentioned. The software is programmed with two digits for the date instead of

four. If you do not change the software program, the computer runs into problems and starts to do very strange things when it hits the year 2000. That is the first area, the area we have been focused on.

Since I have been involved in this issue—and it has been almost a year since I began to focus on it—I have discovered there were two other areas. So in addition to software, you have a hardware problem symbolized in the phrase ''embedded chips.'' These little tiny chips that drive the computers, the miracles of the modern technological age, very often have a date function built into them. And, again, in order to save space on the chip, the date function is built in with two digits.

Where are the embedded chips? They are embedded everywhere. Andy Grove, the CEO of Intel, the largest producer of chips in the United States, was here in Washington a week or so ago. He was asked, ''How serious is the Y2K problem?'' He said, ''It is very serious. And the reason is''—he is focusing on the chip side—''you don't know where the embedded chips are embedded.'' ''For example,'' he said, ''the thermostat in your home may not work after New Year's Eve, 1999.'' Now, it will not do you any good to call the manufacturer of the thermostat and ask him, because the manufacturer himself does not know. The chips were purchased, put into the thermostat, without concern as to whether or not they had a date function. And if the manufacturer got some chips that had date functions in them and put those chips into your thermostat, you are going to be very chilly on New Year's Day in the year 2000. And there is no way of knowing in advance whether that is going to happen.

That can be a nuisance for you, it can be a life-or-death situation for some people, and it can be an enormous manufacturing challenge where we are storing and refrigerating meat and other perishables that are dependent on those embedded chips. It can be a life-or-death situation for an automobile manufacturer whose entire plant is now automated with robotics, all of which have embedded chips.

So, as I said, Mr. President, it is not just the software that needs to be changed, as the first of these three areas of concern; it is also the embedded chips that need to be found and dealt with.

As a final footnote to this, I was discussing this whole Y2K issue with an individual at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, more commonly known as the Mormon Church, the largest church in the State which I represent, asking him how prepared the church was. Fortunately, it was good news. He said the church was quite prepared. But he said, ''We have identified, among other things, two embedded chips in the tabernacle organ, which if we do not replace means that the Mormon Tabernacle Choir will not have any organ accompaniment to it on January 1, 2000.'' That shows how ubiquitous the problem of the embedded chips can be and how it can show up in places no one would ever think.

I said there were three areas of concern. I talked about the software and the embedded chips. What is the third? This is the area of connections. Everything in the computer world is connected to everything else in one way or another. I was at the Defense Department talking to those officials about their Y2K problem and made the comment about how difficult it will be in our defense establishment if, on January 1, the screen goes blank, the various screens that handle the computerized information, in our defense establishment.

Deputy Secretary Hamre said, ''No, Senator, if the screen goes blank, while that is a problem, it is not a catastrophe; because if the screen goes blank that tells you you have a problem in that particular piece of equipment. The thing we are worried about is if the screen does not go blank, the computer continues to operate, but another computer system to which it is connected starts feeding it inaccurate data.'' If the computer continues to function, make its calculations that ''zero zero'' really does mean 1900 and begins to give you bad information, that could contaminate your entire database. That, he says, is a bigger concern than if the screen goes blank. Frankly, that had not occurred to me. I was able to add, unhappily, a third category of concern—software, hardware in embedded chips, and now connections.

What are we looking at in our special committee with respect to the year 2000 problem? I have divided it up into seven areas and prioritized these areas. We will look at them in the following order to try to see what we can do to avert disaster in the next 599 days—all the days that are remaining to us. Obviously, we would like to pass a resolution saying that we have an extra 2 or 3 years. We do not, no matter what the Congress does, no matter what the President does, no matter what anybody else does, we have 599 days and counting down, inexorably from right now.

These are the areas of concern. No. 1, utilities. If the power grid goes down because of connections in the computers or because of embedded chips in certain power plants that shut those power plants down because of bad software somewhere, then it is all over. It doesn't matter if every computer in the country is Y2K compliant if you can't plug it into something. So we are focusing first and foremost on utilities and not just power. The water treatment system in every municipality in this country is computer driven and has the potential of being upset because of embedded chips and bad software. Utilities, therefore, are at the top of the list of the things we are addressing in our committee and are doing what we can to try to expose information about and get people worried and working on it.

Second is telecommunications. What happens if you pick up the phone on January 1, 2000, and you cannot get a dial tone? I don't think that is going to happen in the United States. But the evidence is fairly clear that it is going to happen in some countries. If you are running a multinational organization, be it the Defense Department or a corporation, and you pick up the phone and you cannot get a dial tone in various parts of the world, you are in serious trouble. So, behind utilities, we are looking next at telecommunications.

Third, transportation. Instantly people think of the FAA and the inability of the air traffic control system to control airplanes, and that is a concern, but what about shipping on the high seas—global positioning systems that all have chips in them that control the navigation of the oil tankers and the other freighters that are moving commerce all over the world? Here in the United States the railroads are heavily dependent on computer systems to route the traffic that produce the shipment of the heavy materials that keep our Nation going. Transportation is clearly No. 3 following utilities and telecommunications.

No. 4 is the area that got me interested in this problem in the first place, the financial services. What happens if the banks cannot clear checks? What happens if there can be no electronic transfers of funds? I am happy to report that I believe we are fairly well along the road toward getting this problem solved. We have had seven hearings in my subcommittee on the Banking Committee on this issue, but we cannot relax here, either. The financial services clearly come in as the No. 4 concern.

Then, No. 5, general government services, not only Federal but State and local, as well. What happens if in our large cities the county government cannot distribute welfare checks, the county government cannot handle food stamp distribution because of computerization of the way that situation is handled? What happens if HCFA, the Health Care Financing Administration, cannot handle reimbursement of Medicare or Medicaid funds? I have talked to hospitals and other health care providers that are dependent on HCFA reimbursements for their cash flow projections and they use the HCFA cash flow to do such things as purchase ordinary supplies for running the hospital. The whole health care system could grind to a halt if the government services in this area are not made Y2K compliant. The doctors who I have talked to tell me we have long since quit dealing with HCFA with paper. All of our interconnections with HCFA are electronic, and if that system goes down, the ripple effect will be tremendous.

Next, general manufacturing. Fortune magazine had an article on their

web site pointing out how much trouble General Motors is in. I don't mean to single out General Motors because I think every manufacturer has the same kind of problem. In today's world, where computers are available, we operate a just-in-time inventory system where you do not have huge stockpiles of spare parts out on the back lot anymore. With the computer, you have it worked out with your supplier that your spare parts arrive just in time for you to put them in your final manufacturing product. The just-in-time manufacturing system shuts down altogether and the manufacturing shuts down. General Motors has done a survey of every one of their manufacturing plants and they have found embedded chips in every one of their robotic systems. If they do not get this problem solved, they will not be able to produce an automobile after January 1, 2000.

And then, finally, No. 7, listed last because it will come last chronologically, but probably should be listed first in terms of its financial impact if we do not get the other six solved, is litigation. The lawsuits that will be filed will be enormous. Estimates before my subcommittee of the Banking Committee indicate the total litigation bill could run as high as $1 trillion, one-seventh the size of the total economy that will change hands as people sue each other over the problems created by Y2K. We have to make sure we solve the other six so that No. 7 doesn't hit us and destroy us.

The purpose of the special committee created by the Senate, I believe, is to examine all seven of these areas, act as a coordinating point for people involved with each of the areas, and then give reports, both to the Senate and to the people in the country as a whole, as to where we are, because it is not all doom and gloom. We do have areas where we are making progress.

I talked this morning with John Koskinen who heads this effort on behalf of President Clinton in the executive branch. He reported to me that contrary to some of the information we have seen in the press, the Social Security Administration will be all right, and will indeed be able to distribute Social Security checks in the year 2000. Now, if the banking system is all right, those checks can be received, and that is a demonstration of the problem of interconnectivity that we have. But that is a piece of good news. As we focus on the challenge of Y2K, we should not lose sight of the fact that there is good news and there is progress being made.

I close with this observation about the importance of this entire issue. One of the experts with whom I have been in contact since I assumed this new chairmanship said to me, ''The one thing we know for sure about this is that nobody has ever done it before. We have no historical precedent to guide us, to tell us how to handle this and what we can expect.'' And, of course, he was accurate. Of course, that is a true summation of where we are.

Yet when I made that comment to another friend of mine, he said something that I think summarizes exactly the challenge we are facing. He said, ''No, BOB, that is not true. We have a historic example. I said, ''What is it?'' He said, ''the Tower of Babel.'' He said, ''The people got together and decided they were going to build a tower to heaven, and God didn't like it, so he fixed it so they could not talk to each other and that ended it.'' He said, ''That is the paradigm of what we are dealing with here, Y2K.'' We are facing the possibility that after January 1 we cannot talk to each other because the world is all wired by computers, and if, indeed, that turns out to be the case, as was the case in Genesis, that will end it.

I am hoping that everyone recognizes this anniversary for what it is—a milepost on the road toward an inexorable challenge, and that we use the opportunity to take the remaining 599 days to see to it that when we get to New Year's Eve 1999, we can look back and say that we were facing something as serious as the Tower of Babel, but we have, as a Nation, and as a world, faced up to that, and now Y2K is going to be a bump in the road instead of a drive off the cliff.

Mr. DORGAN. Will the Senator from Utah yield for a brief question?

Mr. BENNETT. I am through with my presentation. Yes, I yield.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I feel very comforted knowing that the Senator from Utah is a cochair of the task force along with Senator DODD. I compliment the majority leader, Senator LOTT, and Senator DASCHLE for putting together a commission of the type they have established. I know, serving as ranking member of the legislative branch appropriations subcommittee of which Senator BENNETT is chairman, that he has, in every circumstance, at every hearing, gone through in some detail this Y2K problem. He knows it well and is very concerned about it.

As he properly indicates here in the Senate, this doesn't just deal with Federal agencies. In fact, that is only a very small fraction of what can be affected, unless this problem is dealt with as a nationwide priority. But I wanted to just say, as I have said before on the floor, I think Senator BENNETT is one of the finest people serving in this body. He has devoted a lot of attention to this issue. If this is not handled properly all across this country in both the public and private sector, this could have catastrophic consequences. If handled properly, we probably won't even know that this situation came and went. But I just want to tell you that I feel comforted by his leadership. I thank him very much for all of the attention and time he has devoted to this. He and Senator DODD will spend a substantial amount of time between now and the year 2000 on this very significant issue.

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, I thank my friend who has been very indulgent in my obsession with this issue in the subcommittee of the legislative branch of appropriations. In the spirit of what I just said about reports, I can report to the Senate that he and I heard testimony before our last appropriations subcommittee that the Senate will indeed be Y2K-compliant in the year 2000. The Sergeant at Arms, the Secretary of the Senate, and others, have focused on the priorities and are doing the things necessary to get us there. They are changing the computers in the Senate at the rate now of about a thousand a month. I was startled, as I think my friend, Senator DORGAN, may have been, to learn that there were close to 9,000 computers in the Senate; that is 90 for each Senator. I didn't think we needed that many. But there are. They are being made Y2K-compliant at the rate of about a thousand per month now. That will allow us the requisite amount of time to test the various fixes and see to it that we have it under control.

The one disquieting note that came out of the hearing that I share with my colleagues was that they said, ''We will have the mission-critical systems Y2K compliant by January of 2000.'' I said, ''What is your definition of a 'nonmission-critical system?'' They said, ''Well, the copier in your office may not work.'' There will be many constituents that will be delighted to know that we cannot make copies in January of 2000 until additional work gets done. But I thank my friend for his support in that area and for his very kind words. They are much appreciated.

Mr. WELLSTONE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I also say to my colleague from Utah that I hope he continues with his ''obsession,'' as he described it, because we really need his leadership. I am grateful to him for the important work he is doing.

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN INDONESIA

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a letter that I have sent to the President, which expresses my concern about the ongoing human rights abuses in Indonesia, be printed in the RECORD.

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

U.S. SENATE,
Washington, DC, May 11, 1998.

Hon. WILLIAM J. CLINTON,
President of the United States,
White House, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: I write to express my deep concern about the ongoing human rights abuses in Indonesia. According to the State Department's Country Reports on