use to them or will cut down on the number of tickets that are sold which will raise the prices passengers pay.

The provision about Internet pricing, if implemented, will simply mean there will be no lower prices offered on the Internet than there are elsewhere. That will also raise the prices some passengers pay.

The voluntary attitudes of the airlines are only beginning to go into effect. Even the GAO report quoted by the Senator from Oregon reads:

> The real deal is what the individual airlines come out with in the plans. Once they do, they can be held accountable.

We ought to leave this to that accountability and not decide we know the airline business better than the airlines themselves.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time allotted to the distinguished Senator has expired.

Does the Senator from Oregon yield time to the distinguished Senator from Montana?

Mr. WYDEN. I understand I have about 10 minutes remaining. Would my good friend from Montana like 3 or 4 minutes?

Mr. BURNS. It will only take about a minute. I am opposing the amendment, so the Senator may want to rethink the allotment of that time.

Mr. WYDEN. Why don't I give 3 minutes to my good friend from Montana, and then I will use my remaining time to wrap up.

Mr. BURNS. I thank my friend from Oregon. I will be very brief.

In the Commerce Committee, we struck a deal with the airlines. Today they are going to the FAA with their plan. What we have seen to this point is an outline of what they plan to do. What they plan to give to the FAA, with the FAA exceptions, we should agree to and keep the word of the Commerce Committee that that is the way we are going to do business.

I think we are trying to micromanage. I expect I am the only one who should be concerned about seat width. I fly just as much as anyone else. In fact, to go round trip between here and Montana, we probably have more seat time than we really want.

The chairman of the Subcommittee on Aviation on the Commerce Committee had a very successful hearing in Kalispell, MT. We ought to look at the root of some of the problems, and that is pilot shortage. We had an outstanding hearing on how it affects rural States such as my State of Montana.

I shall oppose these two amendments. I thank my good friend from Oregon. He has been more than gracious with his time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I don't see any other speakers. I will be very brief in wrapping up.

Again with respect to these voluntary pledges that have been made by the airline industry, I think it is worth noting exactly what the General Accounting Office said about this so-called customer service first program.

The General Accounting Office found that of the 16 pledges the airline industry made in their voluntary customer first package, 3 of them are already required by Federal law, 4 of them are already required by what are known as the contracts of carriage, legal contracts, and the vast majority of them aren't written in at all. They are not written in any way with respect to key areas such as making sure consumers are adequately informed about the lowest fares, making sure customers are informed about delays, cancellations, and diversions, returning checked bags within 24 hours, credit card refunds, informing passengers about restrictions on frequent flier rules, and having customer service representatives to actually help the public.

That is what the General Accounting Office said.

I am very hopeful we will see some of the airlines individually go beyond what is being proposed in their voluntary package.

In reading the General Accounting Office and the Congressional Research Service reports that have come out since this voluntary agreement was entered into, anyone will see how woefully inadequate the consumer protections are for the public in this country. In fact, these contracts of carriage, which are legalese and technical lingo that spells out the contract between the consumer and the airline, the Congressional Research Service found most of the front-line airline staff didn't even know what these contracts of carriage were. The consumer would basically have to do somersaults to try to get information about them. It is largely not available, even at the ticket counter in many instances. It shows again how reluctant these airlines are, in the vast majority of instances, to truly inform the public.

At the end of the day, passengers have three types of rights: Rights in effect they already have; rights that will not be spelled out in the contract; and, finally, rights that are being ignored altogether. That is why the Consumers Union today is urging the Senate to adopt these two amendments. They are on the side of the passengers. They understand the voluntary pledges that have been made by the airline industry lack teeth. They are gobbledegook.

I urge my colleagues to strongly support these two amendments, agree with the Consumers Union rather than with the airline industry, and let's ensure that at a time when complaints are at a record level, which is the situation we find ourselves in today, we are making sure the passengers can get a fair shake when it comes to learning about the lowest fare available and learning about their rights when there has been an overbooking.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator from Oregon yield the remainder of his time? The Senator has 6 minutes.

Mr. WYDEN. I yield the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to amendment No. 1625, as modified.

The amendment (No. 1625), as modified, was agreed to.

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question now is on agreeing to amendment No. 1626, as modified.

The amendment (No. 1626), as modified, was agreed to.

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all first-degree amendments to the Transportation appropriations bill must be filed by 12 noon today, Wednesday, September 15, with the exception of one amendment by each leader and a managers' package of amendments.

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

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

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

The legislative assistant proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

THE ECONOMIC CONVULSION IN AGRICULTURE

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I was just at a gathering of family farmers from the State of Minnesota. I want to give a report on what many of these farmers from Minnesota had to say. I know the Chair has met with farmers from his State and is well aware of the economic pain.

This was a gathering of the Farmers Union farmers, although I think as they have traveled from Senate office to Senate office and House office to House office, they speak for many farmers in the country. Their focus is on what can only be described as an economic convulsion in agriculture.

I know this is not only a crisis in the Midwest but it is also a crisis in the South and throughout the entire nation. On present course, we are going to lose a generation of producers. Whether we are talking about farmers in Minnesota or farmers in Arkansas, many very hard-working people are asking nothing more than a decent price for the commodities they

produce. These farmers, who want a decent price so they can have a decent standard of living and so they can support their children, are going to go under.

I will talk a little bit about policy, but, most importantly, I want to talk about families. I think it is important to bring this to the attention of the Senate. On the policy part, I would prefer, if at all possible, to avoid a confrontation about the Freedom to Farm bill. I thought it was ''freedom to fail'' when the bill passed in 1996. I thought it was a terrible piece of legislation; other Senators at that time thought differently. Part of the legislation gave producers more flexibility, which was good. However, the problem we are facing now is the flexibility doesn't do any good because, across the board prices are low and farmers can't cash-flow.

I don't know whether the Chair has had this experience in Arkansas. He probably has. Many farmers will come up to me, and often these farmers will be in their 40's or 50's. They will say: Right now, I am just burning up my equity. I am digging into everything I have in order to keep going. I want to ask you a question: Should I continue to do that? Do I have a future, or should I just get out of farming?

People don't want to get out of farming. They don't want to leave. This is where they farm. This is where they live. This is where they work. The farm has been in their family for four generations.

We have to make a major modification in our farm policy. The modification has to deal with the problem of price. It is a price crisis in rural America. We have to get this emergency assistance package passed. Conferees must meet and report a bill to Congress so that we can get assistance out to farmers now. I think the emergency package must include a disaster relief piece. The Senate version includes no funding for weather related disasters. Although I am supportive of an emergency relief package, I still don't think the Senate-passed version targeted the assistance towards those people who need the most help.

The point is, these producers want to know whether they have a future beyond 1 year. They can't cash-flow on these prices, whether it be for wheat, for corn, for cotton, for rice, for peanuts, or whether it be for livestock producers. They simply cannot cash-flow. They cannot make it. They can work 20 hours a day and be the best managers in the world, and they still won't make it.

I do think we have to raise the loan rate to get the price up. We have to do that. We have to have some kind of a way that our producers have some leverage in the marketplace to get a better price. I think we also need to have a farmer-owned reserve. A farmer-owned reserve would enable our producers to hold on to their grain until they can get a better price from the grain companies.

Whatever the proposal is, I say to all of my colleagues, for our producers—and I imagine it is the same in Arkansas—time is not neutral. It is not on their side. I don't think we can leave this fall without making a change. We have to pass the emergency assistance package, and we have to deal with the price crisis. I have heard discussion about how we are going to leave early. We cannot leave early.

I also want to talk about the whole problem of concentration of power. This is an unbelievable situation. What we have is a situation where our producers, such as our livestock producers, when negotiating to sell, only have three or four processors. They have the Smithfields, the ConAgras, the IPBs, the Hormels and the Cargills. The point is, you have two, three or four firms that control over 40 percent, over 50 percent, sometimes 70–80 percent of the market.

Pork producers are facing extinction, and the packers are in hog heaven. The mergers continue, and we have all of these acquisitions. We need to put free enterprise back into the food industry.

I have had a chance to review the Sherman Act and the Clayton Act and the work of Estes Kefauver and others. We have had two major public hearings, one in Minnesota and one in Iowa, with Joel Klein, who leads the Antitrust Division of the Justice Department, and Mike Dunn, head of the Packers and Stockyards Administration within the Department of Agriculture. Our producers are asking the question: Why, with these laws on the books, isn't there some protection for us? We have all sorts of examples of monopoly. We want to know where is the protection for producers.

It is critical to pass some stronger antitrust legislation. I know Senator LEAHY is doing a great job with his legislation. I am pleased to join with him. I know part of what the Leahy legislation is going to emphasize is that the U.S. Department of Agriculture can ask for a family farm rural community impact statement. It must address the impact these acquisitions and mergers will have on communities. We want to see that USDA has the authority to review these mergers and acquisitions. We want to see that when people break the law and are practicing collusive activities, there are going to be very stiff penalties. We want to set up a separate division within the Justice Department that deals with agriculture and conducts an investigation and an impact study. Again, we need to have some strong antitrust legislation on the books.

This ought to be a bipartisan issue. I think this is one issue on which all the farm organizations agree. We must have some antitrust action. We must have some bargaining power for the producers. We must put free enterprise back into the food industry.

Until we pass this legislation, I will have an amendment on the floor calling for a moratorium on any further acquisitions or mergers for agribusinesses with over $50 million in revenue. We need to take a look at what is going on. We need to pass some legislation now or we need to have a moratorium for one year until we pass legislation. I think there is going to be a considerable amount of support for this. The reason I think there is going to be a lot of support is that I think many of my colleagues have been back in their States, and for those of us who come from rural States, from agricultural States, you can't meet with people and not know we have to take some kind of action.

I want to bring to the attention of my colleagues just what this crisis means in personal terms. I get nervous about the discussions we have about statistics. We talk about loan rates, we talk about target prices, deficiency payments and LPDs. I want to put this crisis in personal terms.

Let me talk, first of all, about the wonderful wisdom of a Kansas farmer.

I want to share a conversation I had with a Kansas farmer, who offered a great analogy that goes right to the heart of what is happening to our livestock producers, in particular, pork producers who are facing extinction while the packers are in hog heaven:

> Hogs can be mean, nasty and greedy animals. When a hog farmer raises hogs, he knows well enough to separate the big boars from the little hogs. No hog producer would put a boar in the same pen with small pigs. The boar would literally attack and kill the smaller pigs.

Yet while no producer would make such an illogical decision, we as a nation have shamelessly allowed the big boars within our own market pen. That is exactly what is happening. The large corporate ''pigs'' have been attacking and killing the smaller producers.

Now, let me just recite a little bit of historical context. These are words that were spoken on the floor. I read this piece and thought of the latest Smithfield effort to gobble up another company. These words were spoken on the floor of the Senate by Wyoming Senator John B. Kendrick in 1921, in support of the Packers and Stockyards Act:

> Nothing under the sun would do more to conduce to increase production in this country and ultimately to cheapen food products for the people of the Nation than a dependable market, one wherein the producer would understand beyond a shadow of doubt that he would not merely get what is called a fair market, but would get the market for his products based on the law of supply and demand. The average producer in this country is a pretty good sport. He is not afraid to take his chances, but he wants to know that he meets the other man on the dead level and does not have to go against stacked cards.

That is exactly what is at issue. Everywhere the family farmers look, whether it be on the input side, or to whom they sell, you have monopolies. We have to, as Senators, be willing to be on the side of family farmers and take on these monopolies. Who do we

represent? Are we Senators from Smithfield, ConAgra or Cargill, which is a huge company in my State. Or, are we Senators who represent family farmers in rural communities?

I had a meeting with about 35 small bankers, independent bankers, community bankers, from rural Minnesota. It was unbelievable; all of them were saying they have not seen anything such as this crisis in their lifetimes. They said if we continue the way we are going right now, we are going to lose these farms. Our hospitals are going to shut down, our businesses are in trouble, our dealers and banks are in trouble. We are not going to be able to support our schools.

This is about the survival of many of our communities, and these bankers they are right. I would, in 1999, like to associate myself with the remarks of Senator John B. Kendrick in 1921. He goes on to say:

> It has been brought to such a high degree of concentration that it is dominated by a few men. The big packers, so-called, stand between hundreds of thousands of producers on the one hand, and millions of consumers on the other. They have their fingers on the pulse of both the producing and consuming markets, and are in such a position of strategic advantage; they have unrestrained powers to manipulate both markets to their own advantage and to the disadvantage of over 99 percent of the people of our country. Such power is too great, Mr. President, to repose it to the hands of any man.

I have been doing a lot of traveling during August meeting with farmers. I have been, certainly, to every single rural community in Minnesota and to gatherings in South Dakota, Iowa, North Dakota, Missouri, and Texas. Each and every time, I will tell you, it is incredible when you speak to farmers. You have 700 or 800 pork producers at a rally, for example, and they know from personal experience who the enemy is. They can't believe that IBP is making record profits while they are going under. How can it be these packers make all this money and the prices for our products don't go down in the grocery stores? Meanwhile, our family farmers, our producers, are facing extinction? What is going on?

When we passed the Sherman Act in late the 1800s, we did it, to protect consumers; but, we also said we as a nation value competition. We thought the food industry was important. We thought we ought to have a lot of producers. We thought we ought to have a wide distribution of land ownership. We thought it was important to have rural communities. Somebody is going to farm land in America. When our family farmers in the Midwest or the South are driven off the land, the mentality seems to be not to worry about it. The argument is made that somebody will farm the land. Somebody will own the animals. But the problem is that it will be these big conglomerates owning the land and the animals. The health and vitality of rural America is not based upon the number of acres of land somebody owns or the number of animals; it is based upon the number of family farmers who live in the community, buy in the community, care about the community.

As far as our national interest is concerned, this is a food scarcity issue. When these big conglomerates finish muscling their way to the dinner table and driving these family farmers out, what will be the price we pay for the food? Will it be safe? Will it be nutritious? Will there be land stewardship? Will you have producers that care about the environment? I think the answer is no.

This is a transition that America will deeply regret. We in the Senate must take action. We must take action to deal with this crisis, and it is a crisis. It is a price crisis. We have to get the loan rate up to get the price up. We have to have a moratorium on all of these acquisitions and mergers.

Eunice Biel from Harmony, MN, a dairy farmer, said:

> We currently milk 100 cows and just built a new milking parlor. We will be milking 120 cows next year. Our 22-year-old son would like to farm with us. But for us to do so he must buy out my husband's mother (his grandmother) because my husband and I who are 46-years-old, still are unable to take over the family farm. Our son must acquire a beginning farmer loan. But should he shoulder that debt if there is no stable milk price? We continuously are told by bankers, veterinarians and ag suppliers that we need to get bigger or we will not survive. At 120 cows, we can manage our herd and farm effectively and efficiently. We should not be forced to expand in order to survive.

Lynn Jostock, a Waseca, MN, dairy farmer, said:

> I have four children. My 11-year-old son Al helps my husband and I by doing chores. But it often is too much to expect of someone so young. For instance, one day our son came home from school. His father asked Al for some help driving the tractor to another farm about 3 miles away. Al was going to come home right afterward. But he wound up helping his father cut hay. Then he helped rake hay. Then he helped bale hay. My son did not return home until 9:30 p.m. He had not yet eaten supper. He had not yet done his schoolwork. We don't have other help. The price we get at the farm gate isn't enough to allow us to hire any farmhands or to help our community by providing more jobs. And it isn't fair to ask your 11-year-old son to work so hard to keep the family going. When will he burn out? How will he ever want to farm?

Above and beyond that, I will just tell you that there is a lot of strain in the families. Families are under tremendous economic pressure, and they are under tremendous personal pressure.

As long as I am talking about families, I want to tell you that in my State of Minnesota there are farmers who talk about taking their lives. There are a number of people who are involved in the social services who are doing an awful lot of visits now to farms. And an awful lot of farmers are right on the edge. Do you want to know something? Their suffering is needless and unnecessary. This is not the result of Adam Smith's ''invisible hand.'' This is not some inexorable economic law. It is not the law of physics. It is not gravity that dictates that family farmers must fall.

We have it within our power to change farm policy and to give these producers a chance. We should not leave. We should not go home until we write some new agricultural policy, a new farm policy that will really make a difference for people.

I am open to all suggestions. I am not arrogant about this. But I will tell you one thing I am insistent upon. I am going to be out on the floor talking about this issue. I am insistent that we take some action. We can't just turn our gaze away from this and act as if it is not happening.

Jan Lundebrek from Benson, a Minnesota bank loan officer:

> As a loan officer at a small town bank, I received a check for $19 for the sale of a 240-pound hog. I immediately went across the street to the grocery store and looked at the price of ham. The store was selling hams for $49. I wrote down that price and showed it to the producer. Then we decided to ask the grocer about the difference. Where does it go? Somebody is getting it, but it isn't the farmer.

We have policies to keep our country safe. We have a defense policy, we have an education policy, but we don't have a policy to protect our strength. We don't have a food policy that protects our farm communities and consumers who spend $49 for a 10-pound ham that the farmer can't even buy through the sale of a 240-pound hog.

Now we have Smithfield that says it wants to buy Murphy. A merger of yet two more of these large packers is just outrageous. I want a moratorium on these mergers and acquisitions. I don't want these big livestock packers to be pushing around family farmers and driving them off the land.

Jan Lundebrek, this is a brilliant example. I want to speak for you, Jan, on the floor of the Senate—A Benson, MN, bank loan officer:

> As a loan officer at a small town bank, I received a check for $19 for the sale of a 240-pound hog. I immediately went across the street to the grocery store and looked at the price of hams. The store was selling hams for $49. I wrote down that price and showed it to the producer. Then we decided to ask the grocer about the difference. Where does it go? Somebody is getting it, but it isn't the farmer.

Let me again point this out. You spend $49 for a 10-pound ham, and this farmer is getting $19 for a 240-pound hog.

I mentioned the Sherman Act and the Clayton Act. I feel as if I am speaking on the floor of the Senate in the late 1800s. Where is the call for antitrust action? Teddy Roosevelt, where are you when we need you?

We have to get serious about this.

Richard Berg, Clements farmer:

> My dad died when I was 9-years-old. Two years later, when I turned 11, I began to farm full time with my older brother. He and I still farm together. This year I will bring in my 48th crop. The farm we own has been in the Berg family for more than 112 years.
>
> When we began farming we would get up at 4 a.m. to do chores. Then we would go to

school. During the evening, after we returned from school, we went back to work farming.

My brother and I each own 360 acres. I never had a line of credit until the past five years. We always made enough to save some and buy machinery when we needed it. Now I have a line of credit against the land that I own that I am always using.

I invested in a hog co-op a few years ago and a corn processing facility. I have a lot of equity tied up there. Neither venture is making money. They're losing money.

There's no one after me who is going to farm.

Les Kyllo, Goodhue dairy farmer:

My grandfather milked 15 cows. My dad milked 26. I have milked as many as 100 cows, and I'm going broke. They made a living out here and I didn't. Since my son went away to college, my farmhands are my 73-year-old father and my 77-year-old father-in-law who has an artificial hip.

I have a barn that needs repairs and updates that I can't afford. I have two children that don't want to farm. At one point, in a 30-mile radius, there were 15 Kyllos farming. Now there are three. And now I'm selling my cows. My family has farmed since my ancestors emigrated to the United States.

When I leave farming, my community will lose the $15,000 I spend locally each year for cattle feed; the $3,000 I spend at the veterinarian; the $3,600 I spend for electricity; or the money I spend for fuel, cattle insemination and other farm needs.

By the way, I would like to thank these farmers. I don't know whether other Senators realize this. I am sure they do. I am sure that people listening to our discussion on the floor realize this. But you know, when people tell you the story of their lives and allow you to talk about them and their strains, they do not do that except if they hope that if enough of us realize what is really going on, we will make the change. That is what they are hoping for. That is what they are hoping for, and that is what we should do.

Alphonse Mathiowetz, Comfrey farmer:

''We were there 43 years and it took 43 seconds to take it all away.'' Alphonse and LaDonna, his spouse, farmed the same land in Comfrey for 43 years. In the spring of 1998 a tornado tore through their community taking with it the work of their lifetime, their farm machinery, their buildings, their trees, their corn bins and their retirement. The Mathiowetz family lost more than $200,000 of equity to the tornado, none of which will be recovered.

Alphonse and LaDonna chose to rebuild their home on the farmstead. Not because they wanted to, but because if they did otherwise the reimbursement they received from their insurance company would have been highly taxed. It was the only financial decision available to the couple.

''I guess it's a blessing to retire, but not this way, watching the farm go away in bulk on an iron truck.''

Steve Cattnach, Luverne small businessperson (insurance agent):

Two local farmers who raise hogs came in both in the same week to withdraw money from their Individual Retirement Accounts. During the course of 10 days the time it takes for the money to arrive both were in twice asking about when their checks would arrive.

A local farmer who has 2 1,200-hog finishing facilities wanted to help his cash-flow by reducing the insurance coverage on his hog buildings from $180,000 each to $165,000 each. The terms of the policy allowed the coverage to be reduced, but the farmer's lender wouldn't allow the coverage to be reduced because the farmer, after 3 years of finishing hogs in those buildings, still owed $180,000 on each building. During those 3 years, he had only paid interest on the money he had borrowed.

Laura Resler, Owatonna farmer:

I have farmed with my husband for 20 years. When we started, we raised two breeds of purebred hogs and sold their offspring as breeding stock. Each animal sold for $300 to $500 per animal. But the increase in size of hog operations made our small breeding stock operation a money-losing venture. Also milked cows to produce manufacturing grade (Grade B) milk. But $10 per hundredweight is not enough to pay the bills, so we had to give up the cows. From the time my husband, Todd, was 18 until now, when he's 41, he's worked for absolutely nothing. Now he works at a job in town so we have funds on which to retire. Our hope is to give our son the farm that's been in the family for generations and let our daughter have the house. But you can't cash-flow a 4–H livestock project. How can he cash-flow the farm?

Many of these youngsters growing up on these farms are not going to be able to farm because these farmers are going to be gone. I have heard people say: Senator WELLSTONE, you come out here and talk about this. What is to be done? Raise the loan rate; get the price up.

If Members don't want to do that, come out here and talk about other ways we can change policy in order to make it work.

Is there any Senator who wants to come to the floor of the Senate, given the economic pain, the economic convulsion, the broken dreams, the broken lives and broken families in rural America, who wants to say stay the course? Is there any Senator who wants to do that? I don't know of any Senator who thinks we should stay the course.

If that is the case, let's have an opportunity for those who have some ideas about how to change this policy so people can get a decent price and there can be some real competition. We want an opportunity to be out here, to introduce those amendments, to introduce those bills, to have votes, and to try to change this. That is what I am talking about.

Darrel Mosel has been farming for 18 years. When he started farming in Sibley County, which is one of Minnesota's largest agricultural counties, there were four implement dealers in Gaylord, the county seat. Today there is none. There is not even an implement dealer in Sibley County.

The same thing has happened to feedstores and grain elevators. Since the farm policies of the 1980s and the resulting reduction in prices, farmers don't buy any new equipment; they either use baling wire to hold things together or they quit. The farmhouses have people in them, but they don't farm. There is something wrong with that.

Again, when he started farming in Sibley County there were four implement dealers in Gaylord, the county seat. Today there is not one—not one. This isn't just the family farmers going under, it is the implement dealers, the businesses, our communities. This is all about whether or not rural America will survive.

Ernie Anderson, a Benson farmer:

Crop insurance has and is ruining the farmer. Because yields of disaster years are figured when calculating the premiums costs, a farmer's yield on which he can buy insurance decreases. As it decreases, it becomes apparent that paying a crop insurance premium doesn't make financial sense because when there is a loss, the claim amount of damaged crops isn't enough to pay the price to put crops in the ground. Crop insurance is supposed to help me. It's not supposed to put me out of business.

Randy Olson, strong, articulate Randy Olson, a college student, beginning farmer, comes home from college each weekend to help on the farm. In March he came home from school and his parents looked like they aged 5 years. The price of milk had dropped from $16.10 in February to $12.10 in March. No business can afford a drop in price like that over a short period of time.

You love your parents, you see them hurt, and it makes you mad.

And prices are going up right now, but it is a heck of a dairy policy if, due to the drought in some areas of the country, Minnesota dairy farmers can do better. That is not a dairy policy.

Gary Wilson, an Odin farmer, received the church newsletter in the mail. What is normally addressed to the entire congregation had been addressed only to farmers. The newsletter said farmers should quit farming if it is not profitable. If larger, corporate-style farms were the way to turn a profit, the independent farmer should let go and find something else to do.

What he doesn't understand is that farmers are his congregation. If we go he won't have a church.

Not only that, Gary, but, again, I will just repeat it. The health and the vitality of our rural communities are not based upon how many acres of land someone owns or how many animals someone owns; it is how many family farmers live and buy in the community. The health and the vitality and the national interests of our Nation are not having a few conglomerate exercising their power over producers, consumers and taxpayers.

Testimony from Northwest Minnesota—this is more painful. John Doe 1 from East Ottertail, MN. Despite the ongoing difficulties, it is amazing, the steadfast willingness of this family to try to hold things together. The farm is farmed by two families, a father and his son. Since dairy prices fell in the second quarter of 1999, there was not enough income for this family to make the loan payments and to provide for family living and cover farm operating expenses. The farm credit services would not release the loan for farm operating assistance, so the family had to borrow money from the lender from

which they are already leasing their cows. They have not been able to feed the cows properly because of the lack of funds. Because they cannot adequately feed their dairy herd, their milk production has fallen and is considerably lower than the herd's average production.

In addition, because there was no money for family living expenses, the parents had to cash out what little retirement savings they had so the two families had something to live on day to day. The son and wife had to let their trailer house go since they could not make the payments, and they moved into a home owned by a relative for the winter.

Most of their machinery is being liquidated. However, there are a few pieces of machinery that go toward paying off their existing debt. The family will sell off 120 acres of land in their struggle to reduce their debt.

Recently, the father has been having serious back troubles and has been unable to help his son with the work. This is tremendous stress, both physically and mentally, on the son. The son has decided he is going to have to sell part of the herd in order to reduce the herd to a number that is more manageable for one person. In addition, the money acquired from selling off part of the herd will be applied toward their debt.

The son hopes these three items combined—selling machinery, land, and parts of the herd—can pay off enough of their debt that he might be able to do some restructuring on the reminder of the farm and to reduce loan repayments to a manageable amount where there is something left to live on after the payments are made. That is what they hope for.

By the way, as long as we are talking about bad luck, in a very bitter, ironic way, at least for me, my travel in farm country in Minnesota and many other States in the country has made me acutely aware of the fact that we are going to have to talk again. Senator BOB KERREY of Nebraska was eloquent when he mentioned we will have to talk about health care that goes with health care coverage that comes with being a citizen in this country.

Do you know what is happening with our farmers? A lot of the farmers, because of this failed policy, because of these record low prices, because of record low income, because, financially, they have their backs to the wall, what do they give up on? They give up on health insurance coverage. So they do not even have any health insurance. Of course, for many of these producers, being able to afford this health insurance coverage in the first place is very difficult. They don't get the same deal that you get if you are working for a big employer. Now many of them say: We cannot afford it. So they have given up on their health insurance coverage, hoping they and their loved ones will not be ill. But you know what? The more stress there is, whether it is more mental stress or more physical stress, the more likely people will be struggling with illness.

John Doe 2, from Goodridge, MN—I say John Doe 2 because these are farmers who do not want their names used, and I respect that. This family has gone through a divorce. The father and three children are operating the farm. The farmer has taken an off-farm job to make payments to the bank and has his a 12-year-old son and 14-year-old daughter operating the farming operation unassisted while he is away at work. The neighbors have threatened to turn him in to Human Services for child abandonment, so he had to have his 18-year-old daughter quit work and stay home to watch the younger children. The 12-year-old boy is working heavy farm equipment, mostly alone. He is driving these big machines and can hardly reach the clutch on the tractor. It is this or lose the farm.

This story really gets to me because this is really complicated. One more time. The family has gone through a divorce and the father and three children are operating the farm.

As long as I am going to take some time to talk about what is happening to family farmers, this is unfortunately not uncommon. The strain on families is unbelievable.

So the father, since he is alone, a single parent, was forced to take an off-farm job to make payments to the bank. His 12-year-old son and 14-year-old daughter are operating the farming operation unassisted while he is at work.

I think a lot of us would say: Wait a minute. You cannot do this. The neighbors, thinking the same thing, have threatened to turn him in to Human Services because they say this is not right.

He has an 18-year-old daughter. He says to her: You have to quit work and stay home to watch the two younger children. The 12-year-old boy is working heavy farm equipment, mostly alone. He is driving these big machines and he can hardly reach the clutch on the tractor. But it is this or lose the farm. That is what is happening out there. This is a convulsion.

I say to my colleague from North Dakota, who is on the floor, I have been saying the reason the farmers in Minnesota have given me their stories and the reason I want to take the time to focus on this is we want an opportunity to change this policy. We want an opportunity to be out here with amendments and with legislation that will lead to some improvement.

Mr. President, John Doe 3.

Mr. DORGAN. I wonder if the Senator from Minnesota will yield.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I will not yield the floor but I will be pleased to yield for a question.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I appreciate the Senator from Minnesota yielding for a question. I suppose some people get irritated about those of us, Senator WELLSTONE, myself, Senator CONRAD, Senator HARKIN, and others who come to the floor to talk so much about the plight of family farmers. But at a time when our newspapers trumpet the growing economy and the good news on Wall Street with a stock market that keeps going up, at the same time we have a full-scale crisis in rural America with grain prices for family farmers in constant dollars being about where they were in the Great Depression.

I held a meeting with Senator WELLSTONE in Minnesota. I held a hearing with Senator HARKIN in Iowa. During the August break we held a hearing in North Dakota under the auspices of the Democratic Policy Committee, and we heard the same thing we have been hearing; that is, we have a serious problem with low prices. You cannot solve this without dealing with prices. Farmers are paying more for what they purchase and getting less for what they sell.

I wanted to just mention two items and then ask the Senator from Minnesota a question. We had a Unity Day rally in North Dakota; 1,600 farmers came. The most memorable moment, I guess, was from a fellow named Arlo, who was an auctioneer. He told of doing an auction sale at this family farm. A little boy came up to him at the end of the sale and grabbed him by the leg, and with tears in his eyes, shouted up at him, he said: You sold my dad's tractor.

The auctioneer, named Arlo, he kind of put his hand on the boy's shoulder to calm him down a bit. The boy wasn't to be calmed. He had tears in his eyes. He said: I wanted to drive that tractor when I got big.

That is what this is about. The mother who lost her farm, who wrote to me and said during the auction sale her 17-year-old son refused to come out of the house to help with the auction sale, refused to come out of his bedroom. That was not because he is a bad kid, but because he so desperately wanted to keep that family farm and was so absolutely heartbroken and could not bring himself to participate in the sale of that farm. That is the human misery that exists on today's family farms.

They are the canary in the mine shaft, with this kind of economic circumstance. Somehow there is a suggestion that what matters in this country is the Dow Jones Industrial Average and not a beautiful wheat field or cattle in the pasture or a hardware store on Main Street. Somehow it is just all numbers and it doesn't matter whether we have a lot of farmers or a couple of corporate farms.

I ask the Senator from Minnesota during his travels—I know Senator WELLSTONE was not only in Minnesota but all around this country in August at farm unity rallies—if he heard anyone, anywhere, believing the so-called Freedom to Farm bill made any sense at all? That is the Freedom to Farm bill that pulls the rug out from under family farmers and says it doesn't matter what the market price of grain is,

you operate the market. You don't need a safety net. A lot of other folks in the country have safety nets, but the farmers are told, no, you don't need a safety net.

Did the Senator find anybody in this country who said: I wrote that bill, I stand behind that bill, that bill makes good sense, and that bill is working?

(Mr. BUNNING assumed the chair.)

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, let me give my colleague from North Dakota kind of a two-part answer to that question; first of all, farmers and citizens in the community are speaking out, because this is all about rural America. It is a strong and clear voice saying: You have to change the policy. This is not working. We are going under. We cannot get a decent price for what we produce. We cannot cash-flow.

So I can very honestly, truthfully say not at one farm gathering anywhere in Minnesota, and I was at a lot of them that not just the farmers showed up at these gatherings. It was farmers bankers, business people, implement dealers, and clergy. It was the community. I promise you, that in the parts of the State I visited approximately fifty percent of the crowd was Republican. But not one of them was defending this farm policy, this Freedom to Farm or ''freedom to fail.''

The second thing I said on the floor of the Senate, and my colleague might want to ask me a follow-up question, I do not see how anybody in the Senate or House of Representatives who has been out there with people can say stay the course. You cannot. We have to change the course. There is just no question about it.

I do not care if we call it a modification. You know what I mean. We can go over it. People can talk about a modification; they can talk about a correction.

I used to hear people on the floor of the Senate say ''stay the course.'' I do not hear them saying ''stay the course'' anymore.

I say to my colleague from North Dakota, the reason I am out here for a while is because I want to make it clear that we want an opportunity to be on this floor with legislation that will make a difference, that will raise the loan rate, get the price up, deal with the problems of all the acquisitions and mergers, and try to put free enterprise back into the food industry. We want to make a difference in order to get this emergency financial assistance package passed. We want to be out here, and we want that opportunity.

The second thing I was saying is that in no way, shape, or form should we adjourn without addressing this crisis. I cannot believe when I read in the papers there is this discussion about leaving. I cannot believe there are people who are saying let's get out of here as soon as possible. No, we have work to do. We should not leave until we take the responsibility as legislators, as Senators who represent our States, to write a new farm bill or make the corrections or modifications that will deal with the price; that will give people a chance to farm and stay on their land. My colleague is absolutely right with his question. He is right on the mark.

Mr. DORGAN. If I can further inquire of the Senator from Minnesota, he is going to be joined and is joined by a number of our colleagues who insist we do something about this farm problem. It is not satisfactory to watch the auction sales occur across the heartland of this country. If you take a look at what is going on in our country and evaluate where we are losing population—I have a map I have shown many times on the floor of the Senate where I have outlined in red all of the counties that have lost more than 10 percent of its population, and we have a huge red circle in the middle of America. Those counties are losing population.

We are depopulating the farm belt in this country because somehow we are told the future of agriculture is the future of corporate agriculture, corporate agrifactories. We can raise hogs by the thousands; we can raise chickens by the millions; we do not need real people driving tractors; we do not need real people living on the land; corporations can farm America from California to Maine.

When that happens, if that happens, this country will have lost something very important. I do not know whether the Senator from Minnesota has read Richard Critchfield. He is an author who has passed away. He was from Fargo, ND, originally. He went on to become a world-renowned author. He wrote a lot of books about rural America. One of the things he wrote about was the refreshment of family values in this country always rolled from family farms to small towns to big cities. The seedbed of family values was always coming from America's family farms—raising a barn after a disaster, the pie socials, the gatherings on Saturday in the small town to celebrate the harvest, the family values that come from living on the land, raising food for a hungry nation, raising children in a crime-free environment, building a school, building communities, building churches, building a way of life.

Somehow we are told those are values that do not matter. What matters is the marketplace, the market system, so if huge grain companies decide when a farmer plants a crop and harvests a crop and takes it to the market that the crop is not worth anything, that is the way life is.

At the same time that farmer is driving a crop to the elevator and told the food does not have any value, we have old women climbing trees in the Sudan foraging for leaves to eat because they are desperately on the verge of starvation. There is something broken about this system. Family farmers are told with the Freedom to Farm they are free. Are you free from monopolistic railroads that overcharge? They do. In our North Dakota, our Public Service Commission said they overcharge over $100 million just in our State, and most of that is from farmers.

Are you free of grain trade monopolies that choke the economic life out of farmers? They are not free from that.

Are you free from mergers and concentrations so that in every direction a farmer looks they find two or three firms controlling it all? Do you want to fatten up a steer and ship the steer to a packing plant? Good for you because you have three choices that slaughter 80 percent of the steers in America.

Do you think that is a deck that is stacked against you? Or how about this, free from trade agreements that stack the deck against family farmers? Try to take a load of durum wheat into Canada. I did once. We had millions—12 million bushels—of Canadian durum wheat shipped into this country undermining our market in the first 6 months of this year alone.

I went up with a man named Earl in a 12-year-old orange truck with 200 bushels of durum. All the way to the border, we found these trucks with millions of bushels of wheat coming south. I know I have told the story before. If people are tired of hearing it, it does not matter to me a bit. I will continue talking about it because it talks about the fundamental unfairness of our trade.

We got to the border with Earl's orange truck and 200 bushels. We were stopped at the border because you cannot get that American durum into Canada. Why? Because our trade agreements that have been made by trade negotiators who have forgotten who they work for are incompetent trade agreements that sold out the interests of family farmers in this country. Farmers have every right to be very angry about it and ought to demand it changes.

Those are a few areas—mergers and concentration, grain trade, railroads, bad trade agreement, and a Freedom to Farm bill that says price support for farmers do not matter much. We know how wrong that is.

The question for this country of ours is this: We ramped up as a nation a few years ago to save Mexico in times of serious financial crisis. Will a country that is willing to ramp up its effort to save a neighbor, will a country that is willing to commit $50 billion to save Mexico decide that it is worth saving family farmers in times of crisis? We have people who say it is not worth that, we ought not take the time, we do not have the ability, we do not have the money, we do not have the ideas, they say.

This is not rocket science. It is easy. I say, change the Freedom to Farm bill to a bill that says how about freedom to make a decent living. If you grow food and are good at it, there ought to be a connection between efforts and reward. We ought not have the notion there are minimum wages and minimum opportunities and all kinds of

other safety nets across the country, but for families who stay on American farms and raise their kids and support small towns, there is nothing but a bleak future because corporations are taking over what they do, and that is just fine for the future, some will say.

It is not fine for the future. This is about who we are as a country, who we want to be. It is about the soul of this country, and if this country, as Thomas Jefferson used to say, does not care about broad-based economic ownership and opportunity for the American people, then it will quickly lose its political freedoms as well.

Political freedom relates to economic freedom. Economic freedom comes from broad-based economic ownership, and nowhere is that more important and more evident than in the production of this country's food.

I ask the Senator from Minnesota one question: Isn't it the case that there are 7 million people in Europe farming who get a decent price for their farm product because the countries of Europe have been hungry and have decided, as a matter of national security and economic and social policy, they want families living on the farm operating European farms? Isn't it the case that is the policy in Europe—and God bless them and good for them—and that policy is contrasted with folks, some in this Chamber, who say that ought not be the policy? Our policy ought to be to say whatever happens happen; if corporations farm America, that is fine. Isn't that the case? Isn't that the dichotomy of the two policies?

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from North Dakota for his question. I appreciate it.

First of all, let me go back to a comment I made earlier, as long as the Senator from North Dakota brings up the example of Europe. I am going to continue to give other examples and talk about what is happening to other farmers in my State of Minnesota in a moment. I intend to stay out on the floor of the Senate and talk about farm prices for a while. I have a ruptured disk in my back, and as long as I can stand, which maybe not be that much longer but a while, I will continue to speak.

What is happening is this pain is not Adam Smith's invisible hand. It is not the law of physics. It is not gravity that farmers must fall down. The only inevitability to what is happening to our producers is the inevitability of a stacked deck, a stacked deck which basically ripped away in the ''freedom to fail'' bill any kind of safety net, a stacked deck that does not give our farmers any kind of leverage in the marketplace.

Whatever happened to farmer-owned reserves? Whatever happened to raising the loan rate to give people better targeting power, a better target price vis-a-vis the grain companies? And what in the world are we doing about three and four packers who dominate 60 to 70 percent of the market vis-a-vis our livestock producers?

So I say to my colleague from North Dakota, yes, the Europeans have decided, given their experience in two wars, food is precious. They do not want people going hungry. They value family farmers, and they think it is in their national interest to support family farmers, and therefore the Europeans have a policy that protects that. I completely agree with my colleague who says we ought to also care as much about family farmers as the Europeans do.

When some of my colleagues say, let's rely on the market, farmers kind of smile and say: Free enterprise? Where is it? We want free enterprise. We want competition. But please explain to your colleagues in the Senate that a few packers dominate the market. They are making record profits while we're facing extinction.

One example that I think says it all is an example I read earlier, which I cannot find right now. I will have to come back to it. It is about the economics of this.

I will talk about John Doe 3 from Euclid, MN, a farmer waiting for a foreclosure of his real estate. But first, I ask my staff to find the example of a grocery store and what farmers are being paid for hogs.

Here is the example: Again, Jan Lundebrek of Benson, MN, a loan officer at a small town bank, received a check for $19 from the sale of a 240-pound hog: ''I immediately went across the street to the grocery store and looked at the price of hams. The store was selling hams for $49. I wrote down that price and showed it to the producer. Then we decided to go ask the grocer about the difference.''

She is the loan officer. ''Where does it go? Somebody's getting it, but it isn't the farmer,'' says this Minnesota bank loan officer, Jan Lundebrek of Benson. ''We have policies to keep our country safe. We have a defense policy. We have an education policy. But we don't have a policy to protect our strength. We don't have a food policy to protect our farms, communities, and consumers who spend $49 for a 10-pound ham that the farmers can't even buy through the sale of a 240-pound hog.''

So $49 for a 10-pound ham, and this farmer gets $19 for a 240-pound hog.

I am going to go back to the stories of farmers in my State, but as long as I am taking some time on the floor of the Senate seeing Senator DORGAN out here triggered another thought. He was saying the other night, at a Farmers Union gathering, that his parents were Farmers Union members, and he went to many blessed Farmers Union picnics and gatherings. And then he went on to say: My parents would never have believed that. Senator DORGAN, his roots are rural America. He said: My parents would have never believed I would have had a chance to be a Senator. They certainly would not believe that I would be getting an award from the Farmers Union.

The only thing I could think of saying at this gathering to the pork producers that were there was: I'm more committed to you than any other Senator, which catches people's attention. I heard Senator DORGAN talk about his background and I thought of my own. The reason why I bring up this story is every time I am at a gathering of pork producers, I am thinking of my mother, Minnie Wellstone, who is up there in Heaven, smiling, I am sure, and saying: Paul, good Jewish boy that you are, what are you doing speaking at all these gatherings of pork producers and organizing with these farmers?

So I said at this gathering to Senator DORGAN: If you think your parents would be surprised, believe me, my mother and father would be very surprised. My mother, Minnie Wellstone, was a cafeteria worker. This was her life. Her philosophy was that people should get a decent wage for their work.

In many ways, this is what we are talking about. We are saying, if we believe as a country that a person who works hard, 40-hours a week, almost 52 weeks a year, ought to make a living wage and be able to support his or her family, then shouldn't the men and women who provide the food and fiber for our nation make at least a living wage?

I think the vast majority of the people agree they should. The vast majority of people believe they should get a decent price. But that is not what is happening right now. This is a crisis. This is a crisis in rural America: Broken dreams and broken lives and broken families, all of it unnecessary.

Here is an example: This farmer, John Doe 3, is waiting for a foreclosure on his real estate in northwest Minnesota. He is waiting to see whether FSA can help him.

By the way, the Farm Services Administration in Minnesota is doing an excellent job. I say to Tracy Beckman, the director, thank you for your work. But you know what? The Farm Service Administration in Minnesota, and this may very well be the same in the State of Washington and the State of Montana, the FSA local offices are severely understaffed. They cannot even begin to deal with the number of people who are knocking at their door for emergency loans. They are under incredible tension, incredible stress.

As a Senator from Minnesota, I would like to thank all of the FSA people for all of their work. It is incredible. We are getting pretty close in Minnesota to asking for an emergency declaration by the President. We are not asking for the declaration because of a tornado, not because of a flood, not because of a hurricane, but because of record low prices that are driving people out. We are arguing that this is a food scarcity crisis for our country.

A case worker in northwest Minnesota is working to strike a deal with FSA to take a mortgage on a 16-acre building site, which is all these folks

have left. By doing this, she was hoping to encumber the land so the IRS couldn't force these folks to take out a loan against their home.

Since the family did not complete FSA forms in a timely manner, they no longer qualify for any kind of servicing action with FSA except for a straight cash settlement. According to the case worker, since the family filed bankruptcy 2 years ago, no bank will touch them. So they couldn't borrow against their home if they decided on this option. As things stand now, foreclosure on the land is proceeding; and debt settlement proceedings are continuing with the IRS, and at a very slow and difficult pace.

It appears this family's only hope is at the mercy of the IRS and to let the IRS do whatever they want to them for another 4 years. Their wages are already being garnished while judgment on the home site is pending, until they can file bankruptcy again to get rid of the huge IRS tax debt. In the meantime, they work for $8 an hour, out of which they lose 25 percent on the IRS garnishment. They live in their home that the IRS values at $30,000, and this includes the 16-acre building site. They drive vehicles that are in such poor condition it is a daily question of whether they will even make it out of the driveway.

This is what is happening to people.

This year Minnesota ranks the highest in the Nation in understaffed FSA employees. Around 6,000 and I have seen more; this is the most conservative estimate, farms are predicted to go out of existence this year. About 10 percent of farmers are predicted to go out in Minnesota this year, and the number of farmers going out in northwest Minnesota will be much higher. People are going to go under if we continue this failed policy. I don't even see any opportunities. I see a game plan to bring to the floor legislation on which we can't offer amendments. That would basically block us from being able to come to the floor and say: We have some ideas about how we could change farm policy so people could get a decent price, so they and their families can earn a decent living.

The reason I am on the floor today and I know this is inconvenient to other Senators, is because it is my job to fight for people in my State. All of us do that. I am saying I want some assurance that we will have the opportunity to come out with amendments on legislation to change farm policy. All of us. That is point 1.

The second point is, I certainly want to sound the alarm. I want to say to farmers and rural citizens in our States that are agriculture States: Put the pressure on. Don't let the Senate adjourn without taking action.

Don't let people say: We will do these appropriations bills; and we are out of here. That is not acceptable given what is happening to people. That would be the height of irresponsibility.

John Doe 4 from Thief River Falls, MN, this is another story of a father and his son. The bank forced the liquidation last year and there was not enough collateral to cover old loans. The father had never mortgaged the home quarter, thinking that if nothing else, they would always have a place to live. As it turns out, the liquidation has caused a major tax liability which they cannot pay. The father is ill and in his 70s, surviving on Social Security payments. The son is working at an $8-an-hour job that leaves little left to pay bills. Currently, the IRS and the bank are fighting it out to see who gets to put a lien on the father's home quarter and his home. This man was once a respected leader in his community. After all that has happened now, there isn't much left but bitterness in his heart and a future of poverty and destitution.

I can see the reaction of some people saying: Well, isn't this so sad.

Don't be so callous. Let's not be so generous with other people's suffering. I do not believe we should ignore these families, these stories, these lives, this crisis.

One more time, I think the end is really rather important. Currently, the IRS and the bank are fighting it out to see who gets to put a lien on the father's home quarter and his home. This man was once a respected leader in the community. After all that has happened now, there isn't much left but bitterness in his heart and a future of poverty and destitution.

John Doe 5. For anyone who might be watching right now, as opposed to before, the ''John Doe'' is because I am not using the names of families. These are people who have given me stories of their lives, what is happening to them, because they hope that if we can talk about this in the Senate and make it clear that we will fight for people, that it will make a difference. It is hard for people to have somebody talking about them in public.

Here is another story of two families trying to hold on to the farm, still clinging to hope as their farm crumbles. They applied for an FSA loan guarantee, and FSA managed to process the loan for the bank. They are now proceeding with restructuring. However, some of the family members have become very nervous about the large debt that needs to be refinanced and things have begun to fall apart.

As it stands now, the two families have decided to abandon the FSA loan and have laid out a partial liquidation plan with the bank. The bank wants the families to sign a plan, agreeing to a formal and inflexible liquidation schedule. The family was hoping to work things out more informally to accommodate tax consequences and adjust for seasonal livestock prices, as their assets are sold. At this point, the families are not sure the bank will agree and are waiting, hoping, and praying that they will make it through.

Again, the problem with this particular situation, as in all these stories, is these are people who can't cash-flow. They are just trying to hold on. That is what this is all about.

Farmer suicides are one of the deepest tragedies of our Nation's farm crisis. For many men and women, the grueling daily battle against circumstances beyond their control rips away at their spirits. They are haunted that they may be the ones who lose possession of the lands that their great, great grandparents homesteaded and that their grandparents held on to during the darkest days of the Great Depression. That is what people feel. This tragedy is made all the more haunting and real in this letter left by a young farmer, the father of a 6-year-old and a 3-year-old. He committed suicide July 26.

After 6 years of hard work and heroic efforts, he knew that bankruptcy was inevitable. He listened to the failing crop prices on the radio report one last time, and he killed himself. His widow made parts of the suicide letter public in an attempt to show the desperation that is gripping farmers throughout rural America. In releasing the letter, she explained that the farm had been in the family for over 100 years. It was the land where her husband was born, worked, dreamed, and died. From the letter:

> Farming has brought me a lot of memories, some happy but most of all grief. The grief has finally won out, the low prices, bills piling up, just everything. The kids deserve better and so do you. All I ever wanted was to farm since I was a little kid and especially this place. I know now that it's never going to happen. I don't blame anybody but myself for sticking around farming for as long as I have. That's why you have to get away with the kids from this and me. I'm just a failure at everything it seems like. They finally won.

I think it is worth reading again. There are some people in northwest Minnesota, Willard Brunelle and others, who are involved in what basically they call Suicide Watch. I think in the last month, Willard said they have paid something like 30 or 40 visits over a month or the last 2 months, if one can imagine. So the letter that the husband leaves to the wife:

> Farming has brought me a lot of memories, some happy but most of all grief. The grief has finally won out, the low prices, bills piling up, just everything. The kids deserve better and so do you. All I ever wanted was to farm since I was a little kid and especially this place. I know now that it's never going to happen. I don't blame anybody but myself for sticking around farming as long as I have. That's why you have to get away with the kids from this and me. I'm just a failure at everything it seems like. They finally won.

By way of apology to my colleagues for, in a way, bringing the Senate to a standstill for a little while, one of the reasons I do so, in addition to the reasons I have mentioned, is that when I was a college teacher in Northfield, MN, I became involved with a lot of the farmers, I guess in the early 1970s, but in the mid-1980s, I did a lot of work with farmers, a lot of organizing with farmers.

(Mr. BURNS assumed the Chair.)

Mr. WELLSTONE. There are several friends of mine who took their lives. There were a number of suicides. We had all of these foreclosures, and I used to sit in with farmers and block those foreclosures. It was always done with nonviolence and dignity.

I am emotional about what is now going on. I probably need to go back and forth between serious and not so serious, since I am taking some time to talk. I remember that in the mid-1980s, in the State of Minnesota, many people were losing their farms. This is where they not only lived but where they worked. These farmers didn't have much hope and didn't have any empowering explanation as to what was happening to them or how they could fight this. It became fertile ground for the politics of hatred.

The Chair and I don't agree on issues, but I respect the Chair. I don't think we engage in this type of politics. But that was really vicious politics of hatred, of scapegoating. When I say ''scapegoating,'' it was anti-Semitic, and all the rest. I am Jewish. I am the son of a Jewish immigrant who fled persecution in Russia. My good friends told me one story about Minnesota and that I should stop organizing because these groups were kind of precursors to an armed militia. When you are five-five-and-a-half, you don't listen to that. I went out and spoke at a gathering in a town we call Alexandria, MN. The Chair knows our State. I finished speaking at this farm gathering, and this big guy came up to me and he said, ''What nationality are you?'' I said, ''American.'' I thought, what is going on here? I hadn't mentioned being Jewish in this talk.

He said, ''Where are your parents from?'' No, he said, ''Where were you born?'' I said, ''Washington, DC.'' He said, ''Where are your parents from?'' I said, ''My father was born in the Ukraine and fled persecution. My mother's family was from the Ukraine, but she was born and raised on the Lower East Side of New York City.'' He said, ''Then you are a Jew.''

I tensed up. I mean, I was ready for whatever was going to come next. I said, ''Yes, I am.'' He stuck out this big hand and he said, ''Buddy, I am a Finn, and we minorities have to struggle together.'' That is one of the many reasons I have come to love Minnesota.

I think what is happening right now in our farm communities and in our rural communities is far more serious than in the mid-1980s. This is an economic convulsion. We are acting in the Senate and House as if it is business as usual.

Greenbush, MN, Jane Doe 6. Here is another problem case where there is not enough collateral to cover all creditors. In a usual situation, FSA has a first mortgage and the bank is in a second position. A good portion of the land is going into CRP, but FSA, or the bank, will not lend the family money to get it established. Even with the CRP payments, there will not be enough money to pay off all the debt by the end of contract. The family is looking to liquidate the farm now and take their licking up front. If they do this, the bank will lose more money than if the family decided to keep the land and CRP. The bank is threatening to try to get the family's truck, their only source of income and equity.

These folks are in their sixties and would like to get the matter behind them. They still hope to build up some retirement where they still have their health and they can work. They are not building up any retirement.

The toughest question for me to answer is when farmers say: I am burning up all my equity. I am literally burning up my equity to try to keep going. I have a question for you, Senator WELLSTONE, or it could be for any of us. A farmer states, ''I am willing to do this. I have nothing in my savings, no retirement. I have nothing. Do I have any future? Am I going to get a decent price? Because if I don't have any future, I should get out now. But I want to have a future; I want to farm. The farm has been in my family for generations. I want my children to have a chance to farm.''

Well, you know, I want to be able to answer yes. But I think the Senate and the House of Representatives, are going to have to take some action. As it currently looks, we will have a financial assistance package that doesn't do the job. It has to be better. We certainly have to have disaster relief in it, and I will insist on the floor of the Senate again.

As I look to some of these AMTA payments, too much of it is going to go to people who don't need it that much. Not enough will go to people who do need the assistance. But we have to get this out to people. That only enables people to live in order to farm another day. But it doesn't tell people where they are the following year, and years to follow. The farmers in Minnesota, in the heartland, the farmers in the South, the farmers in our country are not interested in, year after year after year, hanging on the question of whether there is going to be some emergency assistance for them. They are interested in getting some more power as producers so they can have some leverage in the marketplace; so they can have a decent price; so they can earn a decent living; so they can give their children the care they need and deserve. That is not too much to ask for.

When I talk about raising the loan rate for a decent price, we must also tie a safety net piece with antitrust legislation. We need both policies. One of the amendments I will bring to the floor is that we should have a moratorium on these acquisitions and mergers. We must call for a moratorium right now on these big companies until we take a serious look at real antitrust action. Now, it is true that the Cargills, the ConAgras, the IBPs, the ADMs and all the rest are the big players, the heavy hitters. They are the investors. They make big contributions. A lot of these family farmers who I am talking about in Minnesota, and in the other States I visited, are certainly in no position to make big contributions. So to whom does the Senate belong? Does it belong to these big packers? Are we the Senate for ADM, or for ConAgra, or for Cargill? Or are we a Senate that still belongs to family farmers and rural people?

In this particular case and I am sorry to have to formulate it this way, but do you know what? It is an accurate formulation. Some people who benefit might like low prices for family farmers. But those are not family farmers. We have to take some action.

This is Jane Doe 7, from Thief River Falls, MN. Northwest Minnesota has been hit by too much rain. Farmers were not even able to put in much of their crop. We have had crop disease and record low prices. We can't do anything about the weather, but we can do something about record low prices, can we not, colleagues? Does anybody think we should stay the course any longer? How many farmers have to go under? How many small businesses in our rural communities have to go under? How much more pain does there have to be?

What are we waiting for?

My State of northwest Minnesota is really hard hit. I have been to so many gatherings. I started out the August break in northwest Minnesota with Congressman COLLIN PETERSON. Congressman PETERSON is from the Seventh Congressional District. During that time touring farms in northwest Minnesota, in spite of all that farmers are going through, gave me hope, and gave me fight. This is the way in which the farmers keep me going because I thought to myself: I am going to go out there and Paul, even if you are full of indignation, and you think what is happening to the producers is just unconscionable, if we have these gatherings at Thief River Falls, Crookston, or wherever, and only 10 farmers show up, then what that means is a lot of people just want to throw in the towel.

We had these gatherings. Congressman PETERSON and I had these gatherings together. I am telling you that anywhere from 125 to maybe 400 farmers showed up at a time. They were showing up not because I was there. It had nothing to do with me. It had to do with the reality of their lives. It is the desperation of their lives. They came to make a plea and to say: Please change the farm policy. We can't cash-flow with these prices. Please do something.

But the really good part is they came because they still had some fight in them.

Then we built up and organized in Minnesota to the Rural Crisis Unity Day; didn't we, Jodi? Jodi Niehoff was there with me from Melrose, MN. She is the daughter of a dairy farmer. We

traveled around the State. We had a Rural Crisis Unity Day. I do not know how many people were there, but it was just a huge gathering at the Carver County Fairground. It was great.

What was great about it was we had half the Minnesota delegation there. That is a start.

What these farmers were saying, what these bankers were saying, and what these business people were saying is: We don't want you to stay the course. We want you to change the course because on present course we are going to lose our farms and lose our businesses. That is going to affect our schools and our hospitals. We want you to be sensitive to what is going on.

Why are we in the Senate so generous with the pain of other people? Why do we think we have so many other things to do that are more important than changing farm policy for these family farmers so these family farmers can survive?

What these farmers are now saying is: Can we have a rally?

What next? The reason I am taking some time on the floor of the Senate right now is to say what next? We demand the opportunity to be able to bring legislation to the floor to change this policy. That is what I am fighting for. That is what is next.

Emergency financial assistance has to be passed. But then there is getting the loan rate up for the price. Then there will be the moratorium proposal on these acquisitions and mergers, Smithfield and Murphy being the latest. It is unbelievable. It is an insult.

When I took economics classes, I was taught when you had four firms that dominated over 50 percent of the market, it was an oligarchy at best, and a monopoly at worst.

But I will tell you something. I will keep talking about these farmers and what is happening to them. But I will tell you this: It is a matter of needing to take some action now. I am going to do everything I know how as a United States Senator, and everything I know how to do, to make sure before we leave that we have an honest and a thorough debate about agricultural policy. I intend a debate with Senators coming to the floor and bringing forth proposals as to how we can improve this policy so that the family farmers in my State of Minnesota have a chance. But also let's not sound like a speech on the floor of the Senate. I don't have any illusions that it is a tough fight. I said it earlier.

In all due respect, a few of these grain companies and a few of these packers are the giants. These are the heavy hitters. These are the people who seem to count today in politics. The sooner we change this rotten system of financing campaigns, the better off we will all be.

But what I am picking up on is I think we will be back. First, we will have this vote. We all are accountable. If we change things for the better, great.

Senators, do you want to raise the loan rate to get prices up? Do you want to pass antitrust action to give our producers and consumers some protections? Great. But we will have a debate, and we will have a vote.

If you vote against it, and you do not have proposals that make any difference, then I will just say this: I think you will see farmers and rural people back in your State. They will put the pressure on. If nothing changes in the next month or so, I hope, frankly, in my State of Minnesota that I will see after harvest and after Thanksgiving debate. Thanksgiving would be a good time to do it, before Hanukkah and Christmas. That would be a good time to talk about the moral dimensions of this crisis.

I see the religious community across the board in our metropolitan areas bringing family farmers to our urban communities to meet with people who do not live in rural America to have a dialog, with plenty of media coverage, to again bring to the attention of the Nation what is happening. Because I think one of our challenges is people sort of find it hard to believe. They say: Well, Senator WELLSTONE, you are out here on the floor, and you all are talking about this crisis, but the economy is booming while we have this depression in agriculture.

We need to talk about the depth of the crisis, and also all the ways in which this affects America. We don't want a few people to own all the land. We don't want these conglomerates to muscle their way to the dinner table and control our whole food industry, all the way from the seed to the grocery shelf. We don't want to have these big factory farm operations. You can see it in some of these huge hog feed lot operations right now, which are so polluting and so disrespectful of the land and the air and the water. As a Catholic bishop said 15 years ago, ''We are all but strangers and guests in this land.'' We are here to make a better, maybe not Heaven on Earth, but a better Earth on Earth.

Do you think that these conglomerates, when they become farmers and make all the decisions, that they will have any respect for the communities? Do you think they are going to buy in the communities? Do you think they are going to have any respect for the land, the water, and for the environment? Do we really want, with such a precious item as food, to see this kind of concentration of power? It is absolutely frightening.

I am a Midwesterner though born in Washington, DC, and attended school at the University of North Carolina, but we have lived in Minnesota and our children have grown up there, as have our grandchildren. I have had a chance to do some travel in the South. It is the same. I remember going to Lubbock, TX. At farms down there, we heard the producers speak. It is different crops, but everything else is the same. They are talking about cotton, rice, peanuts. It is the same thing; they can't make a living.

Everywhere I go, I get a chance to speak and meet with farmers and their families. People come up to speak; I hear a voice that says: Thanks for coming, Senator; thank you for sharing. I turn around to shake hands and see whoever made those remarks crying. I see people with tears in their eyes.

How would you feel if you were going to lose everything? How would you feel if this were where you lived, this were where you worked, this were a farm that had been in your family for generations? It is so painful. It is so painful.

Maybe this is the definition of being a bleeding-heart liberal. Maybe that is what I epitomize here. But I don't think so. I am a liberal, but that has nothing to do with bleeding-heart liberal. It does have to do with me being a Senator from the State of Minnesota. I am a Senator from an agricultural State. I am a Senator who comes from a State with a thriving metropolitan area, Minneapolis-St. Paul and suburbs—a great place to live. I am a Senator from Minnesota, and the other part of our State is in economic pain. I am not going to be in the Senate while so many of these farmers go under, are spat out of the economy, chopped into pieces, without fighting like heck.

I have some leverage as a Senator that I can exert, I can focus on. I can call for a debate and insist on a debate. I have so many colleagues who care so much about this. I wish I knew agriculture as well as some of them. I know it pretty well. Some of the Senators are immersed in it. Senator DASCHLE, our leader—I hear him speak all the time because he is a leader of the Democrats. When he talks about agriculture, it is completely different. We can see it is from the heart and soul. Senator HARKIN, ranking minority member of the Senate Agriculture Committee—nobody cares more; no one is tougher; no one is more of a fighter. Both Senators from North Dakota, Senator DORGAN and Senator CONRAD—Senator CONRAD always has graphs, charts, and figures; he is just great with numbers. He knows this quantitatively and knows it every other way. Senator DORGAN is on the floor all the time. Senator JOHNSON from South Dakota is unpretentious. He cares for people. It is great to have a Member like that in the Senate.

I get sick of the bashing of public service. There are so many good people. Senator GRASSLEY from Iowa—we don't agree on everything, but we had a hearing, that Senator GRASSLEY and Senator HARKIN were kind enough to invite me to in Iowa, dealing with the whole question of concentration of power. Senator GRASSLEY asked a lot of tough questions about what is going on with all the mergers and acquisitions. There is Senator BLANCHE LINCOLN. When she speaks abut agriculture, it is unbelievable. It is her life, her farm, her family. There is nothing abstract about this to

her. Or Senator LANDRIEU who was at our gathering today.

It is Midwest; it is South.

Senator ROBERTS from Kansas—I don't agree with him, but he cares. He is a capable Senator. Senator LUGAR, who I think is one of the Senators who knows the most about foreign affairs, I do not agree with him on this policy question, but you can't find a better Senator.

I am not here to bash Senators; I am out here to say that I think this institution, the Senate, is on trial in rural America. This institution cannot afford to turn its gaze away from what is happening in rural America, to put family farmers and rural people in parentheses and act as if that isn't happening. We can't afford to do this.

I come to the floor of the Senate today to make a plea for action. I come to the floor of the Senate today to say I am going to be coming to the floor of the Senate in these mini filibusters. I call it a ''mini'' filibuster because I don't have that good of a back. If I had a good back, I could go for many more hours. I cannot stand for that long. As soon as I sit down, I lose the privilege to speak. However, I can come to the floor of the Senate several long hours at a time and keep insisting that, A, we have the opportunity to be out here with legislation to address this crisis in agriculture—that is not an unreasonable request, I say to the majority leader—and, B, to make it crystal clear that I will do everything I can to prevent the Senate from adjourning. I say this to my legislative director. We should not adjourn until we take this action.

Jane Doe, Thief River Falls, MN: Multiple years of bad weather and poor prices have destroyed the cash flow in this farming operation. The family put much of the land into CRP—the Conservation Reserve Program—to make payment to creditors. A couple of years ago, the hay market was good and the family decided to put the balance into alfalfa. Since then, prices for hay have fallen substantially and again bad grain greatly reduced the quality of the hay produced, thereby making it more difficult to sell. The family is hoping for some relief through their crop insurance. If their crop insurance fails, they will have to sell some of the land to pay down debt before the entire farm is lost.

This is a case of an older couple trying to help their son continue the farming operation and it slipped away from them. The father borrowed on his real estate to help his son get established and used his pension as collateral. He needed additional funds, so he borrowed again on the real estate and used his Social Security check as collateral. Bad weather and poor prices again took their toll. This time he borrowed on his cattle and machinery, using it to refinance the farming operation. In the meantime, with no income left on which to live, the parents were forced to use credit cards to finance their family living. The amount accumulated to about $25,000 on a number of credit cards. The family is no longer able to keep up with the payments to the card companies. They have gotten together and decided that liquidation is the only solution.

Some of the land has been sold and they are working with the two banks to reduce payments to free up some money on which to live day to day until the remaining land can be sold. The cattle and machinery will be sold next year. In the meantime, the parents, who are well in their 70s, are having some health problems. Steps are being taken to get the county nursing services involved to address their medical needs.

I will make a couple of different points, as long as we are talking about nursing homes. This is a slight deviation, but I think it is all interrelated when we are talking about rural America. Because of this Budget Act that we passed 2 years ago, with these caps, we are now in a situation where the Medicare reimbursement is so low that it is literally going to shut down many of our rural hospitals, including those in my State of Minnesota. I did not vote for it. I am glad I did not. But the point is, it does not matter.

As long as we are talking about a family with this kind of pain, here is another thing that hasn't been mentioned. The home health care services and the hospitals in our rural communities, especially in those States that kept costs down, such as Minnesota, are now being penalized for having kept costs down. Because we don't have any fat in our system, the Medicare reimbursement is way below the cost of providing care, and guess what, you don't have to be a rocket scientist to know that many of the citizens in our rural communities are elderly, especially since fewer and fewer of our young people can farm and live in the communities.

I was at a meeting yesterday with Senator MOYNIHAN in his office. He brought together a number of Senators to talk about this. From teaching hospitals to nursing homes to our rural hospitals to home health care, we have seen the equivalent of Draconian cuts in reimbursement, and they cannot go on. What a bitter irony. We have young people in our rural communities who cannot look to a future as family farmers because, one, they cannot afford to farm because of this failed policy, what many farmers call not Freedom to Farm but ''farming for free.'' Two, as they think about whether they want to live in our rural communities, the second question besides ''Can I afford to?'' is ''Do I want to?'' When there isn't good health care and hospitals shut down and there isn't a good school system and there aren't small businesses, you don't want to live in the community. That is what is going on.

Why am I out here? Why am I engaged in a filibuster right now? Because a lot of the small towns in my State of Minnesota are going to become ghost towns if something isn't done. That is a fact. They are going to become ghost towns. So it seems to me it is important for the Senate to address this question.

Jane Doe 8, from Greenbush, MN: I say to my colleague, the Senator from Kentucky, I say Jane Doe and John Doe because people don't want their names being used. I don't blame them. We are talking about people's lives. But these people did want others to know what is happening to them because these farm families in my State of Minnesota believe if Senators know what is happening to them, understand the dimensions of this crisis, that the Senate will take action to change things for the better. You know what? Some people will have a cynical smile on their face and say: How naive. I say: Good for the people. They should continue to believe if we only understand what is happening to them we will make things better. That is what citizens should believe. That is what citizens should believe. My only prayer is that we do make things better.

Jane Doe 8, Greenbush, MN: This family tried to split its farming operation from the locker plant business because both were going under. However, the family did not qualify for a rural development loan and the bank was not willing to wait to see if the Small Business Administration could be brought into the picture. The bank is currently working on the liquidation, and the family is trying to salvage what they can of their home and building site.

I have, in addition to Minnesota, some Farm Aid stories as well. Jane Doe 9, from Felton, MN: This is a farmer who is voluntarily liquidating his grain and sugar beet operation. He sold off much of his beet stock to reduce debt but was hoping to get lenders to hold off on a machinery auction until next year because of the taxes he will have to pay on the sugar beet stock. The lenders are refusing, citing concerns of decreasing machinery values due to all the auction sales in that area. Unless he can find another lender to pay off the current nervous lender, this farmer will incur a major tax problem and may be forced to sell some of his land in order to pay the taxes he owes from other forced sales he has had to make.

This is a father and son operation in which they are trying to transfer the farm to the son at market value and leave the remaining debt with the father. This is a situation where there is more debt than the farm is worth. In addition, the father's spouse has Alzheimer's disease and is currently in a nursing home. If the farm can be transferred to the son at market value, there is hope to make the operation viable and he could thereby support his parents as best he could. The father would be destitute and would have to try to work some kind of debt settlement out with FSA and other lenders.

This is a simple case of voluntary liquidation. This is a story of a fairly new farm couple who was farming in partnership with the husband's uncle. The husband suffered a farm accident which has rendered his right arm useless. The couple recently went through a liquidation plan. Fortunately, the couple had not acquired much debt and they will get out. In this situation, the couple was determining options toward liquidation on their farm because they could see no way to continue farming their operation.

The primary concern of the couple was to be able to keep their home and building site. The couple has a number of outstanding bills from creditors yet to be paid one of the companies has filed a lien as well as debt with FSA and a local bank. Only about a third of the cropland was planted this spring due to wet conditions. The current plan is to wait until October to take any further servicing action. What little crop the couple harvests will go toward paying off the debt.

Both the wife and husband are working other jobs off the farm, as well as doing the existing farm operations after their work. They also farm the husband's parents' land. Should they decide to quit, this creates questions as to how his parents are going to make their debt payments and have any income to live on. This couple will have to wait until October and then assess the situation after the harvest.

Jane Doe 10 from Thief River Falls, MN. The farm is already liquidated and, in doing so, created a serious tax consequence with which she is now trying to deal. She used the farm wrap program to help cover CPA work as she negotiates with IRS and the State of Minnesota. At this moment, there is not much to do except wait and let the chips fall where they may.

(Mr. VOINOVICH assumed the chair.)

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I have some letters. We had Farm Aid this weekend in Manassas. There were a number of people there. Willie Nelson, of course, has been doing this for years. He was joined by Neil Young and John Mellencamp and many other artists and many other farmers. The most important thing about this, and I give them all the credit in the world, is not only the money they raised to help farmers, but this time they really put a focus on this crisis. They are not Johnny-come-lately. They have been at this for any number of years. They were talking about the need to change farm policy:

Dear Willie Nelson and Farm Aid: My father has been a rancher and farmer all his life.

Before I do this, let me say, again, these are going to be letters from all around the country that go to the heart of what is going on, but, because of a bad back, I probably will be finishing up relatively soon. Hopefully, this is just the beginning of pushing as hard as I can.

My wife Sheila and I were at the Farm Aid. It was very moving because one can only really appreciate it when musicians and artists care about people and are willing to donate their talents. Also, there were a lot of farmers there. Again, I will tell you this is the most emotional thing for me since I have been in the Senate. This is the most emotional experience I have had, seeing what people have been going through.

I say to the Chair now, the Senator from Ohio, for the last several hours I have been going through stories of families, many who want to be anonymous, but it is their economic situation. They cannot cash-flow on these prices. They cannot. What I have been saying each time there is a new Presiding Officer—I get to make a plea to the new Presiding Officer—what I have been saying is that I am not arrogant, and there can be different proposals, but we cannot leave here without having the debate and some amendments and legislation that hopefully will pass which will change the course, which will make the difference.

The status quo is unacceptable because, under status quo, we are going to have a whole generation of producers that are going to be gone. That is all there is to it. This will be the death knell for our rural communities, and I think it will be, as I have said more than once in the last several hours, this will be a transition that our Nation will deeply regret because the last thing in the world a good conservative Republican wants is for a few people to own all the land.

We want competition. We want to see our producers have some leverage in the marketplace so they can get a decent price. That is what this is all about.

We need antitrust action. It is interesting. I am really surprised, frankly, more hasn't been made of Viacom wanting to buy CBS. That is overflow of information in a democracy. It is scary to have a few companies control so much.

Food is very precious, and we do not want a few conglomerates basically controlling all of this.

I am moving from Minnesota to a letter to Farm Aid requesting help. Names are withheld:

Dear Mr. Willie Nelson and Farm Aid:

My father has been a rancher and a farmer all of his life. He started as a teenager on his father's sheep and cattle ranch in Eastern Nevada and over the years has had his share of hard work and battles with drought, poor stock and crop prices, bad neighbors who have tried to run him out of business, the IRS, the Forest Service, the BLM (Bureau of Land Management) the FHA (now FSA), etc. Those who have contributed the most to his demise have been the IRS, the BLM and the FSA. Drought and poor crop prices have also contributed a significant blow, in the last several years, to his hay farming operation which is located 50 miles from Ely, Nevada, the closest town. He is single, he lives alone with no family close by, he is 85 years old, his health is failing, his knees are so bad he can hardly make it to the mailbox which is 100 feet from the house. His wife left him a few years ago, after 25 years of marriage just for reasons associated with his prostate operation. He was involved several years ago in a hay bailer accident which rendered his left arm useless. He struggles to eke out a meager living from a 600-acre alfalfa hay farm with the help of two Mexicans, which now he no longer can pay and had to let go. Without their help he cannot harvest his hay. He used to own 750 acres of alfalfa, but the FSA—

By the way, these are letters, not positions I am taking. This is what people are saying—

left him with 600 acres and without justification would not loan him the funds to replace a caved in water well which feeds 160 acres of the 600 left. Last year the bottom fell out of the hay market and he was forced to sell his hay at an enormous loss. This left him with no funds to grow or harvest the hay this year or pay all of his bills. He gets $500 a month from Social Security, most of which goes for drugs and medical care and has been forced to borrow money from family to feed himself.

I ask unanimous consent the testimony from this concert be printed in the RECORD.

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

LETTERS TO FARM AID

SEPTEMBER 10, 1999.

DEAR MR. WILLIE NELSON AND FARM AID: My father * * * has been a rancher and farmer all of his life. He started as a teenager on his fathers sheep and cattle ranch in Eastern, Nevada and over the years has had his share of hard work and battles with drought, poor stock and crop prices, bad neighbors who have tried to run him out of business, the IRS, the Forest Service, the BLM (Bureau of Land Management), the FHA (now the FSA), etc. Those who have contributed the most to his demise have been the IRS, the BLM and the FSA. Drought and poor crop prices have also contributed a significant blow, in the last several years, to his hay farming operation which is located 50 miles from Ely, Nevada, the closest town.

He is single, he lives alone with no family close by, he is 85 years old, his health is failing, his knees are so bad he can hardly make it to his mailbox, which is 100 feet from the house. His wife left him a few years ago, after 25 years of marriage just for reasons associated with his prostate operation. He was involved several years ago in a hay bailer accident, which rendered his left arm useless.

He struggles to eke out a meager living from a 600-acre alfalfa hay farm with the help of two Mexicans, which now he no longer can pay and had to let go. Without their help he cannot harvest his hay. He used to own 750 acres of alfalfa, but the FSA, through dishonest dealings left him with just 600 acres and without justification would not loan him the funds to replace a caved in water well which feeds 160 acres of the 600 left.

Last year the bottom fell out of the hay market and he was forced to sell his hay at an enormous loss. ($110/ton hay for $40/ton). This left him with no funds to grow or harvest the hay this year or pay all of his bills. He gets $500 a month from Social Security, most of which goes for drugs and medical care and has been forced to borrow money from family to feed himself.

Day by day he sits at home waiting and hoping for a lucky break while the US Government (FSA) prepares to repossess all that he has left in life. Interestingly enough, it was US Government agricultural policies and the Federal Bureau of Land Management

that put him where he is today, like hundreds of other farmers.

He suffers from depression (I wonder why), but will not leave the farm and refuses to declare bankruptcy because he believes that money will come from somewhere to help him get back on his feet.

Frankly, he needs to retire, but he has no other place he wants to go. We have been hoping that he could find a buyer for the place who would pay off the debts and allow him to stay on the place as long as he wants, as a caretaker. In fact, if he could get his debts paid off, he could lease the land to neighboring farmers for enough to survive on.

Please consider his case and help him anyway you can. We have done as much for him as our finances will allow.

* * * * *

Help for him is urgent. He was told by the FSA that he had until the end of August, 1999, last month before they would take any action. The absolute deadline, I presume is October 31st of this year. He is currently seeking help from an accountant and consultant (whom he cannot afford). If you like you may contact * * *. In fact, it may be to my father's advantage for you to channel any financial aid you can give, through * * *. * * * could give you the most accurate and up to date appraisal of his circumstances and debt load.

Thank you for listening. Please help.

DEAR FARM AID: My name is * * * and I am writing to request help for my Father's Farm. My Father is a Vietnam Era Veteran and a corn/soybean/livestock farmer in dire need of assistance. After years of poor prices, the farm economy has finally caught up to him. My Father is too proud to ask for assistance from an organization like Farm Aid, but I thought I would send a note in hopes someone may be able to give him some help or guidance.

My Father was a member of the Illinois National Guard from 1965–1971. He was not sent to Vietnam, however, his ''Unit'' (I may be using the wrong terminology.) was in a group destined for Vietnam had the War gone on longer. (Much like the guard troops sent to Desert Storm.) He was Honorably Discharged.

My family farm is located in Central Illinois in a small town called Chatsworth, Illinois. My family has owned the farm my Father currently farms for approximately 80 years. My Dad is fourth generation, so that takes it back to my great-grandfather. We farm approximately 650 acres tillable and plant corn and soybeans. (250 from the family farm, 250 rented, 150 recently purchased. Note: My uncle also farms a portion of the old family place.)

In addition to the tillable acreage, we have approximately 175 acres of pasture land. We graze approximately 125 head of beef cattle. We also have 50–100 feeder pigs at any one time during the year.

My Dad has been running the farm for the past eighteen years. Like most other farmers, he works 365 days a year. He has taken 2 vacation days in the past 18 years and has maybe had 1 sick day. He loves what he does, although you would never hear him say it that way. I love what he does and what he stands for and what the family farming way of life is about.

He's a strong man, so outwardly he doesn't let it show when times get tough. I'm not so strong, and it tears me up inside to see how hard he and other farmers work and then lose everything. This way of life is so grand, so important to the fabric of our great nation, that we can't let it die.

Everyone knows the hardships farmers have endured in recent years. My Father's story is no different than many, I suppose. Bottom line is, he doesn't receive a fair price for his product and he can't pay his operating costs/land payments. Not unlike almost all other family farmers, he makes it year by year with loans from the local banks. This year may be different, however. The banks have not said they will foreclose, but they are leaning heavily in that direction.

It is at this point that I swallow my pride and ask for assistance. I don't know what anyone can do for us. We follow Farm Aid. We contribute to Farm Aid. We know Farm Aid and people like yourself are there for family farmers. We aren't quite sure how to access the help network though. I know though I can't bear to see my Father's livelihood go by the wayside.

So, if you could, either send me some information regarding possible assistance or give us some direction in our time of need I would sincerely appreciate it.

SEPTEMBER 11, 1999.

DEAR FARM AID: We are a dairy farm in Pennsylvania who really needs your help. We tried to get your help years ago, but it seems that no one in our area has ever received help from your organization. We have had a serious drought here this year and we have no idea how we are going to feed our herd of dairy cows, let alone us getting paid. We are also losing our farm to the Farm Credit mortgage company.

We had a sickness that affected our herd several years ago and we lost a lot of our cows. When you pay $1,200–$1,500 for one cow and only get $200.00 for her at the auction house, you can't very well replace them when you've lost about 100 of them. Then we had a drought several years back and again last year and we lost about half of our crop and had to buy feed again this year.

We are broke! And now we've had a very serious drought here this year. We are in one of the hardest hit counties in Pennsylvania for shortage of rain. We are still on water restrictions. If you can help us in any small way, we would be eternally grateful! We don't want to lose our farm.

My husband is 62 years old and has worked so hard all of his life. This farm is our retirement. We have no pension or savings or 401K or anything. We feel desperate.

Thank you for listening. God bless.

SEPTEMBER 11, 1999.

Re losing our farm in Idaho.

DEAR FARM AID: We got notice yesterday that the bank is going to auction our 400 acre farm, including our house and other buildings on Sept. 29 to get the money we still owe them, which is about 140,000 dollars by the time attorney fees, etc. are added in. We will lose the 267,000 dollars we have already paid into this farm. Our attorney said he would go to the auction to let them know that we will be exercising our right of redemption. Then we are supposed to have up to a year to try to get the funds to buy back our farm. In the meantime, whoever buys the farm can force us to move or can ask us to pay rent if we want to stay.

I have a couple questions I am hoping you can answer for us.

First, we tried to get refinanced and even with our equity we weren't able to because we were behind on some other bills including a couple of years back property taxes. We put up 160 acres for sale hoping to get it sold to pay the bank but it appears it is now too late for that. Do you know of anyone who would be willing to talk to us about financing us or at least give us some advice? Our attorney isn't very helpful along those lines.

Second, if we have up to a year to try to get the funds necessary to buy the farm back, can they actually make us move off the property or do they have to wait until the year is up. Our attorney says they can force us to move but someone else told us about a couple of old laws that are still in effect that say we can still live here. I haven't researched them yet but two have to do with homestead acts and another is called the Farm Husbandry Act of 1938. Do you know anything about these and if they would help us at all?

I don't know if you can help us or if you even give out advice but we are desperate to save our farm and will not stop fighting until it is over. Thank you for listening.

SEPTEMBER 8, 1999.

DEAR FARM AID: Hello—I am (was) a small organic farmer in Southeast PA. Between developers after our land, wholesalers who pay late and vandals, we had to give up. My wife and parents are too ill to continue.

I believe in what I do but around here the financial institutions favor development. I do not need financial aid for survival or anything but I would like to find a lendor who has faith in farmers so I can return to the land. I could use some counseling. The stress of the last three years has affected me a little.

Any advice would be helpful. Keep up the good work.

SEPTEMBER 8, 1999.

DEAR FARM AID: Hi. I am a farmers wife from the Shenandoah Valley of VA. As if we had not had a bad enough year. Now we are out of hay, out of water. Our spring, creek and pond have dried up, and we are being forced to sell off our herd which sustains us from year to year just to keep going a little longer. We have gone for help like, for example, to Farm Service, which we have never wanted to do before. Now we feel we have no choice.

You know, just like the Indians were, we are a proud people. Anyway, they will pay to put a well in if we come up with half the cost, which only means to us that some more of our cattle will have to be sold to come up with that. In other words, what do we do? We need advice and we need a huge miracle and I am usually the positive one.

Right beside us a farm was sold out from underneath us all to a landdeveloper and we fought tooth and nail to keep the subdivision out and yet here we are fighting again just to stay afloat. Please help give us advice or whatever.

There is this concert this coming Sunday and I have watched it on TV from the start and thought how commendable it all is and now we are in the very same position as the other farmers Willie and his friends have helped through the years.

I have written a song about us, the farmers and our plight, and I want Mr. Nelson to hear it. But, more important, I want to hear him and see him in person . . . how can we get in if we raise the money to get there? What do we have to do? We need a lift of our spirits, some reason to keep us going or trying to go forward. I am sorry if I am bringing you down by reading this. I did not mean to pour this all out. I guess I needed to and hoped someone would understand.

Farming is all we know and all we want to do. Like the Indians, it is coming to the point that we are being drivven off our own land for the sake of so called progress. I call it decay of the American way of life. I call it an American tragedy of the like that has not been seen since the war against the Indians of which I have a strong heritage from.

God help us to survive the best we know how and how to think with our heart first then our head. My head tells me to quit. My heart says we cannot.

Please let me hear from you. Please give us hope. And God bless you richly for your part

in helping the American farmer to survive another year.

SEPTEMBER 8, 1999.

DEAR FARM AID: How can I go about contacting the people who help the farmers with money? I would like to get my brother-in-law on the list to be helped. The drought the past 2 years has killed his soybean crop and he cannot afford crop insurance. He is just a small time North Mississippi farmer, a former sharecropper. He is 56 and has just a 8th grade education. He lives with his parents who live on social security. He rents his land each year, about 50–100 acres. Please let me know.

JUNE 24, 1999.

DEAR SIR: My mother and father-in-law saved and borrowed enough money in 1945 to buy an 80 acre farm between Fowler and Quincy, ILL. They farmed with horses, milked cows, raised hogs in the timbered creek bed and raised 2 children. My husband has now had the farm turned over to him since his parents have passed away and his sister was killed in a car accident 2 years ago.

My husband is and has always been a very hard worker. We both work at jobs full time in Quincy and farm besides. We were both raised on a farm and both love farm life. We cash rent 3 other farms close by to go along with ours—but we are still having an awful time. If it wasn't for our jobs in town we would have lost everything his parents worked so hard for several years ago. We are doing all we can but just can't get out of debt—in fact we are going deeper and deeper every year.

My husband and I have shed many tears and many sleepless nights trying to figure out just what to do to save our family farm. We do not want to lose it.

Do you have any help for us or anything else we can do? We lost over $20,000 again last year. It breaks my heart to see my husband work so hard and get so tired working 2 jobs and still not making it.

Please help us. If we could just break even one year things would be so good. Someone surely knows a way to help us.

We need someone to help us with some money soon or we will lose everything.

Thank you for listening to me and hopefully for helping my husband save his deeply loved family farm.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, in the remaining time I have left—and I am not going to take much more time. I characterize this, as I said, as sort of a mini-filibuster or, in any case, it is all I can do in several hours. I can talk about this all day and all night. It is not that I am at a loss of words. But physically I will not be able to go on much longer. The best way to do this is to print in the RECORD this very poignant testimony from Farm Aid.

I will jump from the last part of my presentation to a few facts and figures. Maybe I will finish up on this. I will talk about market concentration.

Four firms control 83 percent of all beef slaughter, four firms control 73 percent of sheep slaughter, four firms control 62 percent of flour milling, four firms control 57 percent of pork slaughter. This is from the work of Bill Hefrin, from the University of Missouri, who does superb work.

This concentration will result in four or five food and fiber clusters that control production from the gene to the store shelf. Is that what the American people want? When we get these alliances of Monsanto, Cargill, and all the rest, they will reduce market concentration to farmers. These clusters will eliminate independent farmers and businessowners. These clusters will make it difficult for new firms to start. And these clusters will prevent consumers from realizing lower prices.

Listen to this, consumer America: Since 1984, real consumer food prices have increased by 2.8 percent, while producer prices for that food have fallen 35.7 percent. Do any of the consumers in America, do any families in America, feel a 35-percent drop in food prices? Of course not.

The farm retail spread grows wider and wider. This concentration threatens global security. A few dominant multinational firms are going to control information, markets, decision-making, and seed packets. There is a new technology. It is incredible when you hear about this terminator technology which is inserting a gene to prevent the next generation of seed from germinating which, again, threatens economic viability, sustainability.

We are talking about livestock confinement, huge feeding operations, with all of the environmental challenges. We are talking about multinational firms that remove profits from local communities. As I said, we have talked about this huge concentration of power.

For example, four of every five beef cattle are slaughtered by the four largest firms: IBP; ConAgra; Excel, owned by Cargill; and Farmland National Beef.

Three of every five hogs are slaughtered by the four largest firms. The top four include Murphy, Carroll's Foods, Continental Grain, and Smithfield. And now Smithfield wants to buy up Murphy.

Half of all the broilers are slaughtered by the largest four firms. The six largest are: Tyson, Gold Kist, Perdue Farms, Pilgrim's Pride, ConAgra, and Wayne.

Listen, when you look at the grain industry, you have the same situation where, when farmers look to whom they sell the grain, it is a few large companies that dominate.

Let me conclude.

I say to my colleagues, I have come to the floor of the Senate and have spoken for several hours to make a plea and to make a demand. I have tried to put this farm crisis in personal terms. I thank the farmers in Minnesota for letting me speak about their lives.

I have said that the status quo is unconscionable, it is unacceptable. I have said we have to change the policy. We have to give people a decent price. That we can do. I have said that the reason I have come to the floor of the Senate is to make the demand that: Yesterday, if not tomorrow, if not next week, we have the opportunity to bring legislation to the floor to deal with this crisis.

I have come to the floor of the Senate to say that we cannot adjourn—it would not be responsible, it would not be right—without taking action to help improve the situation for farmers. Why else are we here but to try to do better for people? What could be more important than for us, the Senate, as an institution—Democrats and Republicans—to pass legislation that would correct these problems and help alleviate this suffering and pain and make such a positive difference in the lives of so many people in Minnesota that I love—so many farmers in so many rural communities?

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT—Continued

AMENDMENT NO. 1677

(Purpose: To express the sense of the Senate concerning CAFE standards for sport utility vehicles and other light trucks)

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk and ask unanimous consent that it be considered to be in order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Washington [Mr. GORTON], for himself, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. BRYAN, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. REED, Mr. MOYNIHAN, and Mr. CHAFEE, proposes an amendment numbered 1677.

Mr. GORTON. I ask unanimous consent further reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

At the appropriate place in title III, insert the following:

SEC. 3___. SENSE OF THE SENATE CONCERNING CAFE STANDARDS.

(a) FINDINGS.—The Senate finds that—

(1) the corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) law, codified at chapter 329 of title 49, United States Code, is critical to reducing the dependence of the United States on foreign oil, reducing air pollution and carbon dioxide, and saving consumers money at the gas pump;

(2) the cars and light trucks of the United States are responsible for 20 percent of the carbon dioxide pollution generated in the United States;

(3) the average fuel economy of all new passenger vehicles is at its lowest point since 1980, while fuel consumption is at its highest;

(4) since 1995, a provision in the transportation appropriations Acts has prohibited the Department of Transportation from examining the need to raise CAFE standards