

in the context of a financial plan for the future of the United States is to see it as a roadmap to opportunity and success and prosperity.

I close with this. Because we had the two biggest tax increases in history in this decade, Americans have paid in far more money than we are going to need. It is like going to the grocery store and you hand the man a \$10 bill for a \$2.45 gallon of milk. You expect change. You expect to get something back when you pay more than is needed for what you have ordered. You would not think much of the grocer who said: I'm going to give you two more gallons of milk and a pound of bacon, whether you need it or not. That is what has happened. The President said we have the Government covered, the costs are covered, but they have overpaid. Now we are going to give them a whole bunch more Government, whether they have ordered it or not.

I think we need a little change. Americans deserve some tax relief, and I am pleased to have had this opportunity to present this financial plan which the President should sign.

I yield the floor.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I think we have used the time that has been allocated. I ask unanimous consent for an additional 10 minutes. Since I am the only one present, the chances are probably pretty good.

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

#### A BUDGET AGREEMENT

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I am very pleased my associates could come over this morning and talk about some of the programs that are before us, to talk about some of the directions we will be taking. I think there is another area, in addition to what has been talked about, that is right before us. We are dealing now with spending. We are now in the process of finishing the appropriations process. Congress must adopt 13 different appropriations bills for future spending of the Government and we are in the process of doing that.

We also have some budget limitations that we have placed on ourselves, some caps that we have to honor. We are dealing also with emergency spending. We have talked some now about the surpluses that have been available. The surpluses that are available this year, however, are generally Social Security dollars. But there are \$14 billion in the regular budget and those will, of course, be available. Most of those have already been set aside as emergency spending.

What we have before us is an opportunity to continue to work and complete this matter of funding the budget for this year. At the same time, we must pass it on to the White House. We must find some agreement, either that or have some continuing resolutions

that will put us into the future or, in fact, we are faced with the possibility of the President vetoing the legislation and of having the Government shut down, as happened in the past. I hope this will not be the case.

I noticed in the paper the other day the President has indicated he would like nothing better than a bipartisan compromise. Hopefully, that is what will happen. Yet he has suggested "if only the Republicans could be a little more reasonable." I am not sure that is necessarily a part of it. Probably his White House aides are happy about this partisan combat because, as we know, the last time the Government was shut down, the Congress shouldered all the responsibility. I do not believe that ought to be the case, and hopefully it will not be this year. We are looking forward to working in those areas.

In terms of Social Security, there are some changes that need to be made. We are talking about saving Social Security. We ought to do that. We are committed to doing that. The method of doing it currently, of course, is to put the Social Security surplus in to replace the publicly held debt. The fact is, it then becomes debt that has to be covered by the taxpayers when the time comes to use it.

We also are looking at a change in the Social Security Act which responds to what is happening with Social Security. The demographics are changing. When Social Security started, there were 34 people working for every 1 beneficiary. People paid about \$30 a year into the program. Now there are three people working for every beneficiary, and it is moving toward two. They are paying 12.5 percent of up to nearly \$80,000 into this fund.

The fact is, over a period of time, probably in 20 years, there will not be enough money to continue as we have, so we have to make some changes. The choices are very simple ones basically:

We can increase taxes. Nobody really wants to do that. The Social Security tax is the largest tax paid by almost all taxpayers in the lower-income brackets.

We can reduce benefits. People are not much interested in that.

The third alternative, of course, is to increase the revenue that comes from the moneys that are in the trust fund. We are very anxious to do that. It also gives an opportunity to take that money when it comes in and put it somewhere other than into additional national debt loans and put it into individual accounts that people would have as their own, to be invested in the private sector for a much higher yield.

These are some of the things with which we grapple. Certainly, we are going to be working with the administration to see if we can do something in that respect. I do not think there is willingness on this side to trade off tax relief for increased spending. I hope

not, and I do not believe we will do that.

On the other hand, we can find, I am sure, agreement in the appropriations areas, and we can move forward with that.

Mr. President, our time has expired. I see there is a Senator on the other side of the isle, so I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KYL). Under the previous order, the time until 2 p.m. shall be controlled by the Senator from Illinois, Mr. DURBIN, or his designee.

The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, I say to my colleague from Wyoming, I did not hear all of his remarks, but I always appreciate what he has to say, agree or disagree.

#### ECONOMIC CONVULSION IN AGRICULTURE

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I will not speak for a long time about the economic convulsion in agriculture. I think my colleague sees some of this in Wyoming as well. I said last week I was going to come to the floor and talk about what is happening to family farmers in Minnesota and around the country. I want to speak about this briefly today and announce a bill that I will be introducing. I also want to say to my colleagues, as I see us moving forward over the next couple of days this week, that I do intend to be back on the floor with amendments that relate to how we can get a decent price for family farmers and how we can get some competition and how we can put some free enterprise back into the food industry.

I am also prepared—and I am sure other Senators would feel the same way if they came from an agricultural State—I am also prepared, starting this week and every week, to spend a considerable amount of time before the Senate talking, not so much in statistical terms but more in personal terms, about what is happening.

I give, by the way, a lot of credit to Willie Nelson and Neil Young and John Mellencamp for putting together Farm Aid. I had a chance to be there yesterday morning with my wife Sheila. It was an important gathering. I thank them for bringing some attention to the crisis in agriculture and what is happening to family farmers.

They are not Johnny-come-latelys. They have been at this for some time. There was a rally this morning, a "Save the Family Farm" coalition rally, and then the Farmers Union was meeting with Secretary Glickman. I know there are hundreds of Farmers Union members who are going to be meeting with Republican and Democratic Senators.

What everybody is saying right now is, we have this convulsion in agriculture. When I was a college teacher

in the mid-1980s in Northfield, MN, in Rice County, I did a lot of organizing with farmers. I had some friends who took their lives. I am not being melodramatic, unfortunately. I was at more foreclosures than I ever wanted to be. I saw a tremendous amount of economic pain.

What we are experiencing now in agriculture in this country is far worse. On present course, we are going to lose, as I said last week, a generation of family farmers. I simply say, in an emphatic way, the political question for us is whether we stay the course or whether we change course. I do not believe that any Senator, Democrat or Republican, who comes from a State like the State of Minnesota and who has been traveling in communities and seeing the pain in people's eyes and seeing people who literally are almost at the very end, could not take the position that we have to do something different when it comes to agricultural policy.

I am not going to be shrill today—hopefully any other day—but I am telling my colleagues, the status quo is unacceptable. It is unacceptable. The piece of legislation we passed several years ago called Freedom to Farm—I believe it's really "Freedom to Fail," though others can take a different position—at minimum has to be modified. If we do not take the cap off the loan rate and we do not have some kind of target price and we do not do something to make sure that farmers have a decent price for what they produce so they can get the cash flow to earn a decent living, they are going to go under. Many of them are going under right now as I speak.

The second thing I want to talk about is a piece of legislation I will offer this week as an amendment to the bankruptcy bill. I will have plenty of data. For example, five firms account for over 80 percent of beef packing market. That is a higher concentration than the FTC found in 1918 leading up to enactment of the Packers and Stockyards Act. Six firms account for 75 percent of pork packing. Now we have a situation where Smithfield wants to buy out Murphy. And the largest four grain buyers control nearly 40 percent of the elevator facilities.

The legislation I am going to introduce—I am now waiting for the final draft from legislative counsel—will impose a moratorium on mergers, acquisitions, and marketing agreements among dealers, processors, commission merchants, brokers, or operators of a warehouse of agricultural commodities with annual net sales or total assets of more than \$50 million. The moratorium would last for 1 year, or until Congress enacts legislation that addresses the problems of concentration of agriculture, whichever comes first. I think Senator DORGAN is working on a similar piece of legislation. I am sure there

are other Senators who are going to be talking about this.

Going back to the Sherman Act or the Clayton Act, or Senator Estes Kefauver's work in the 1950s, Congress has said there was a role for Government to protect consumers and also to protect producers. In fact, a lot of the history of the Sherman Act and Clayton Act goes back to agriculture and the concerns of family farmers.

What I am saying in this legislation is, obviously, the status quo is not working. These conglomerates have muscled their way to the dinner table. They are pushing family farmers out. There is no real competition in the food industry any longer. In order for our producers to get a decent price, and in order to make sure our producers and family farmers have a future, in order to make sure the rural communities of my State of Minnesota have a future, we are going to have to take some action. Our action and our legislation ought to be on the side of family farmers.

So I intend to introduce this bill later today. I will also draft this as an amendment to the bankruptcy bill. I also will be on the floor with other amendments. Unfortunately, the bankruptcy bill applies all too well to family farmers in my State of Minnesota and to family farmers all around the country.

There are other colleagues who want to speak, so I am going to try to conclude in the next 3 or 4 minutes, I say to my colleague from Oregon. I will not take a lot of time because we only have an hour and others want to speak as well.

But I have had a chance to travel a lot in Minnesota. I have had a chance to spend time in other States—in Iowa, in Texas, in Missouri. I have met with a lot of organizers around the country—in the Midwest and in the South—and I am telling you that I think rural America has to take a stand. I do not care whether we use the language of modifying legislation or amending legislation.

I personally thought the Freedom to Farm was really "Freedom to Fail" from the word "go." Others can have different opinions. But for sure, time is not on the side of family farmers. A lot of people in Minnesota, a lot of farmers are 45, 50 years old. They are burning their equity up. They look at me hard, and they say: Look, Paul, do we basically take everything we have and try to keep this farm going? We will. We want to. It has been in our family for four generations. We love farming. But if there is no future for us, tell us now.

I do not want to tell family farmers in Minnesota there is no future for them. I do not want to tell our rural communities there is no future for them. I do not want to tell our country that a few conglomerates are going to own all the land. Then what will the

price be, and what will be the quality of the food? Will there be an agriculture that respects the air and the land and the water and the environment? I think not.

I do not think our country is yet engaged. I hope the national media will cover this crisis. And it is a crisis. I will be coming to the floor of the Senate with longer and longer and longer and longer speeches, backed up by lots of data and statistics of what is happening in Minnesota, backed up with a lot of personal stories of hard-working people who have now lost their farms, where they not only live but where they have also worked. I will have amendments on legislation, in an effort to change things for the better.

If my colleagues have other ideas about how to change things for the better, great. Then get out on the floor of the Senate—this week, next week, the following week. Personally, at this point in time, I am focused on family farmers in the State of Minnesota. I am focused on our rural communities. I am focused on family farmers and rural communities all across our country.

I intend, as a Senator, to do everything I can on the floor of the Senate to fight for people, everything I know how to do to fight for people. I also am going to spend as much time as I can organizing the farmers because I am convinced, I say to Senator REID and Senator WYDEN, we are going to need farmers and rural people to come and rock this capital before we get the change we need. But we are going to keep pushing very hard. An awful lot of good people's lives are at stake.

I think in many ways this is a question that speaks to what America is about as well. I cannot be silent on it. I know of many Senators from other agricultural States who feel the same way. We have to push this on to the agenda of the Congress, and we have to do it now.

#### EAST TIMOR

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, in the final 1 minute—and I did not bring any talking points; I do not have it written now—I would like to thank the President. I was critical of the President last week about East Timor, but I think we ought to give credit where credit is due.

I am glad he spoke out. I am glad he put pressure on the Indonesian Government. I know there are a number of important questions to resolve about the nature of whatever kind of peace-keeping force goes in, but the sooner the better because this has been genocide. An awful lot of people have had the courage to stand up against the repressive government, or in this particular case, stand up for the independence of East Timor, that have been murdered. The sooner we get an international presence, an international force in there, the better.