done this, but I found this column so compelling. It corresponds very much to the eloquent words of our colleague from West Virginia and the compelling words of our first American President, George Washington.

First of all, we live in a wonderful country that allows people to express their views, whether they be public people or not. The Governor of Minnesota has expressed his views in a national publication that comes to the issue of organized religion. He certainly is entitled to his views, but I think for those of us who disagree with him and, in fact, as public persons, we bear responsibility to challenge those words when they are offensive to millions of Americans, be they Christians, Jews, Muslims, whether or not people who practice their religion in a church, a synagogue, or a mosque. There is every reason to believe that organized religion, if you will, has contributed significantly to the strength and well-being of the Nation.

This morning, in a column by E.J. Dionne called the Gospel of Jesse Ventura, he quotes the statements made by the Governor of Minnesota in which the Governor said:

Organized religion is a sham and a crutch for weak-minded people who need strength in numbers. It tells people to go out and stick their noses in other people's business.

Now, Mr. President, the column:

Well, Governor, I have to hand it to you. You've told us over and over that you say what's on your mind and, because of that, you're unlike the average politician. This statement definitely justifies all your self-congratulation.

Because you're so honest and tough-minded, I figured you wouldn't mind answering a few questions about your comments. I ask them because none of your explanations after the interview helped me understand your meaning. Perhaps I'm thick-headed and you can bring me to your level of enlightenment.

Martin Luther King Jr. was a pastor who led the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He organized church people to fight for justice. Many who opposed him thought he was sticking his nose into other people's business. In his first major civil rights sermon at the Holt Street Baptist Church in Montgomery, Ala., he declared: ''If we are wrong, Jesus of Nazareth was merely a utopian dreamer and never came down to earth! If we are wrong, justice is a lie!''

Please tell me, Governor, I want to know: Was Martin Luther King Jr. ''weak-minded'' for working through ''organized religion''? While you're at it, were all those civil rights activists, so many motivated by religious faith, ''weak-minded'' for risking their lives in the struggle?

Rabbi Abraham Heschel was a brilliant theologian and wrote about the Hebrew prophets. He was moved by his sense of the prophetic to become a leading ally of King's battle for equality. Was he weak-minded?

Dietrich Bonhoffer was a German theologian moved by his faith to oppose Hitler. He went to prison and was eventually killed. ''I have discovered,'' he wrote a few weeks before his execution, ''that only by living fully in the world can we learn to have faith.'' Was Dietrich Bonhoffer using his faith as a ''sham and a crutch?''

The Polish workers of the Solidarity trade union movement, inspired by faith and helped immensely by their ''organized religion,'' faced down the Communist dictatorship in Poland. They risked jail and beatings and helped change the world. Was that weak-minded of them?

What about those theologians who thought through religious questions and the meaning of life on behalf of all those churchy souls you say need crutches? Were Augustine and Aquinas weak-minded? Were Luther and Calvin? What about 20th-century prophets such as Reinhold Niebuhr and Martin Buber? They were towering intellects, I've always thought, but perhaps I'm blind and you can help me see.

I respect and admire the courage you demonstrated in serving our country as a Navy SEAL. But just out of curiosity: Do you think the military chaplains you met were weak-minded?

Father Andrew Greeley, the sociologist, has found that ''relationships related to religion'' are clearly the major forces mobilizing volunteers in America. We're talking here about mentors for children, volunteers in homeless programs, those who give comfort at shelters for battered women. Are all these good volunteers just seeking strength in numbers?

While you were making money wrestling, Mother Teresa was devoting her life to the poor of Calcutta. Maybe you think she would have been better off in the ring with Disco Inferno.

I don't want to get too personal, but I truly want to know what you're trying to tell us. The nuns who taught me in grade school and the Benedictine monks who taught me in high school devoted the whole of their lives to helping young people learn. Was their dedication to others a sign of weakness? The parish I grew up in was full of parents—my own included—whose religious faith motivated them to build a strong community that nurtured us kids. I guess you're telling me those parents I respected were only seeking strength in numbers.

Somewhere around 100 million Americans attend religious services in any given week. Sociologists agree we are one of the most religiously observant countries in the world, especially compared to other wealthy nations. Are we a weak-minded country?

In explaining your comments afterward, you said: ''This is Playboy; they want you to be provocative.'' Does that mean you would have said something different to the editors of, say, Christianity Today?

And, Governor, one last question: Are you tough-minded enough to understand the meaning of the words: ''Your act is wearing thin?''

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.

ART FROM THE HEART

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I thought I would use this time, before we go forward in the Senate with some additional votes, to speak on two matters. I am actually waiting for a few visuals, or pictures, I want to show regarding what I am going to say.

First of all, let me thank a pretty amazing group of young people from my State of Minnesota for coming all the way here to Washington, DC. These are high school students, and they have brought, if you will, art that is from the heart. It is an art display that will be on exhibit in the rotunda of the Russell Senate Office Building.

This month of October is an awareness of domestic violence month. People in the country should understand, if they don't already, that about every 13 seconds, a woman is battered in her home—about every 13 seconds.

A home should be a safe place for women and children. What these students have done is—and I first saw their display at the Harriet Tubman Center back home in Minnesota—they have presented some art that, as I say, is really from the heart. This artwork, in the most powerful way, deals with the devastating impact of violence in homes, not only on women and adults but on children as well.

Quite often, we have debates out here on the floor of the Senate about the negative impact of television violence, or violence in movies, on children. The fact is that for too many children—maybe as many as 5 million children in our country—they don't need to turn on the TV or go to a movie to see the violence; they see the violence in their homes.

We will have this really marvelous display of art by these students from Minnesota, and it will be in the Russell rotunda on display this week. Tonight, for other Senators, at 6:30, there will be a reception for these students. They should be honored for their fine work.

Mr. President, I commend Mr. Dionne. His words speak eloquently to the emotions and feelings of many of us. Again, I respect the Governor of Minnesota in expressing his views, but we certainly have an obligation to express ours. E.J. Dionne has expressed them well with this Member of the Senate.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

DISSIDENTS DISAPPEARING IN BELARUS

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, the government of Belarus has systematically intimidated and punished members of opposition political groups for several years now. Ordinary citizens—some as young as fifteen—have been beaten, arrested, and charged with absurd criminal offenses all because they dared to speak out against the President of Belarus, Alex Lukashenko, and his crushing of basic human rights and civil liberties there.

Recently, however, events have grown worse. Four dissidents, closely watched by the government's omnipresent security police have vanished.