with some technical help. When we saw it again, it said we want to continue to use food as a weapon and keep embargoes on various countries around the world.

I am not happy with this bill. Let's provide income support to farmers, it says, after we pushed for that. But it says do it with something called AMTA payments. We are going to have people getting emergency payments who didn't lose any money because of collapsed prices; they weren't even farming. In fact, the payment limits have gone up. So it is conceivable that some landowners are going to get $460,000 without putting a hand to the plow. That is the new payment limit. Can you imagine telling a taxpayer in a city someplace that we want to help farmers in trouble, and they ask which farmers? Well, somebody is going to get a $460,000 payment whether or not they are actually farming. That is not helping America's family farmers. So there is a lot wrong with the payments provided by this bill.

Similarly, the disaster aid is only $1.2 billion and contains no specific line item for flooded lands. We know that amount shortchanges all the known needs. We know that is not going to cover the drought of the Northeast, the flooding from Hurricane Floyd and the prevented planting in the Upper Midwest—all of the disasters that need to be addressed across this country. But the combination of things in this legislation has put us in a position of asking if we are going to provide some help or no help.

We are in a situation where we have to say yes, we will vote for this package, but without great enthusiasm. This was done the wrong way. Most of us know that. We should have helped farmers who lost income because of collapsed prices and weather disasters, the people who really produce a crop. We ought not to have a $460,000 upper payment limit, and we ought not to have dropped the provision that says we are going to end embargoes on food and medicine forever. It was wrong to drop that. We know that.

I will have to vote for this conference report, without enthusiasm, because there is an emergency and a crisis, and some farmers will not be around if we don't extend a helping hand now. Never again should we do it this way. This is the wrong way to do it. It is not the right way to respond to the emergency that exists in farm country.

My friend, the Senator from Illinois, wants to speak. I thank him for his patience. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BURNS). The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

THE COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN TREATY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, there are several issues that have been debated on the floor this morning, and it is typical of the Senate, which considers myriad issues, to consider some that are quite contrasting. To move from nuclear proliferation to help for soybean growers is about as much a contrast as you could ask for. But it reflects the workload that we face in the Senate, and it reflects the diversity of issues with which we have to deal.

I will speak very briefly to the issue of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty. This nuclear test ban treaty, which may be considered for a vote this afternoon, could be one of the most significant votes ever cast by many Members of the Senate. It appears the vote will be overwhelmingly in favor of the treaty on the Democratic side of the aisle, with a handful of Republican Senators joining us—not enough to enact this treaty into law and to ratify it so that it becomes virtually a law governing the United States. If that occurs, if we defeat this treaty this afternoon—as it appears we are headed to do—it could be one of the single most irresponsible acts ever by the Senate.

Let me give specifics. It was only a few hours ago, in Pakistan, that a military coup took place and replaced the administration of Mr. Sharif. Mr. Sharif had been elected. He was a man with whom we had dealt. He was a person who at least came out of the democratic process. But he was toppled. We have not had that experience in the United States, and I pray we never will. But the military leaders decided they had had enough of Mr. Sharif. They weren't going to wait for an election. They decided to take over. It appears from the press reports that the source of their anger was the fact that Mr. Sharif had not aggressively pursued the war against India, nor had he escalated the nuclear testing that took place just a few months ago.

You may remember, on the Fourth of July, the President of the United States of America stayed in the White House for a special meeting—a rare meeting on a very important national holiday with Mr. Sharif of Pakistan, where he laid down the rule to him that we didn't want to see the Pakistani army engaged in the militia tactics against the Indians in an escalated fight over their territory in Kashmir. He produced, I am told, satellite imagery that verified that the Pakistanis were involved, and he told Mr. Sharif to stop right then and there. If this escalated, two nascent nuclear powers could see this develop into a conflagration that could consume greater parts of Asia. The President was persuasive. Sharif went home and the tension seemed to decline—until yesterday when the military took over.

Why does that have any significance with our vote on a nuclear test ban treaty? How on God's Earth can the United States of America argue to India and Pakistan to stop this madness of testing nuclear weapons and escalating the struggle when we reject a treaty that would end nuclear testing once and for all? It is really talking out of both sides of your mouth.

This nuclear test ban treaty had been supported originally by Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy, Democratic and Republican Presidents, over the years. It was President George Bush who unilaterally said we will stop nuclear testing in the United States. He did not believe that it compromised our national defense, and he certainly was a Republican.

If you listen to the arguments of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, you would think this is just a cut and dried partisan issue, with Republicans on one side and Democrats on the other. The polling tells us that 82 percent of the American people want us to pass this test ban treaty. They understand full well that if more and more nations around the world acquire nuclear weapons, it doesn't make the United States any safer; it makes the world more dangerous. Leaders in some of these countries, who should not be entrusted with a cap gun, will end up with a nuclear weapon, and we will have to worry whether they have the delivery capability.

Why is a nuclear test an important part of it? You can't take this nuclear concept from a tiny little model on a bench and move it up to a bomb that can destroy millions of people without testing it. If you stop the testing, you stop the progress of these countries. Some say there will be rogue nations that will ignore that, that they don't care if you sign a treaty in the United States; they are going to go ahead and build their weapons.

I don't think any of us would suggest that we can guarantee a nuclear-free world or a nuclear-controlled world by a treaty. But ask yourself a basic question: Are we a safer world if we have a nuclear test ban treaty that puts sensing devices in 350 different locations so we can detect these tests that occur? Are we a safer world if we have a regime in place where one nation can challenge another and say, ''I think you have just engaged in the development of a nuclear weapon you are about to test, and under the terms of the treaty I have a right to send in an international inspection team to answer the question once and for all.''

Why, of course, we are a safer world if those two things occur. They will not occur if the Republicans beat down this treaty today, as they have promised they will. An old friend of mine—now passed away—from the city of Chicago, said, ''When it comes to politics, there is always a good reason and a real reason.''

The so-called good reason for opposing the treaty has to do with this belief that it doesn't cover every nation and every possible test.

The real reason, frankly, that a lot of them are nervous about going against this treaty is the fear that in a week or a month or a few months we will have another member of the nuclear club; in a week or a month or a few months we will have more testing between India and Pakistan; in a few weeks we may see what is happening in Pakistan disintegrating further and then having to worry about whether there will be nuclear weapons used in the process of their confrontation with India.

Those who vote to defeat the treaty will wear that collar, and they will know full well that they missed the signal opportunity for the United States to have the moral leadership to say our policy of no nuclear testing should be the world policy; it makes us safer. It makes the world safer.

Sadly, we have spent virtually no time in having committee hearings necessary for a treaty of this complexity, and a very limited time for floor debate. It is a rush to judgment. I am afraid the judgment has already been made. But ultimately the judgment will be made in November of the year 2000 when the American voters have their voice in this process. Our debates on the floor will be long forgotten. But the voters will have the final voice as to which was the moral, responsible course of action to enact a treaty supported by Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy, and the Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a treaty that really gives us an opportunity for a safer world, or to turn our backs on it.

I sincerely hope that enough Republicans on that side of the aisle will muster the political courage to join us. The right thing to do is to pass this treaty.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1999—CONFERENCE REPORT—Continued

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I want to address the second issue before us, and one which is of grave concern in my home State of Illinois. It is the Agriculture appropriations bill.

It has been my high honor to serve on the agriculture appropriations subcommittee in both the House and the Senate. I have been party to some 13 different conferences. That is where the House and Senate come together and try to work out their differences.

I want to say of my chairman of the subcommittee, Senator COCHRAN, that I respect him very much. When I served in the House and he was a conferee, I believe that we always had a constructive dialog. There are important issues involving American agriculture. I was honored to be appointed to the same committee in the Senate, and I have respected him again for the contribution he has made as chairman of the committee.

But what happened to Senator COCHRAN in this conference shouldn't happen to anyone in the Senate. He was moving along at a good pace, a constructive pace, to resolve differences between the House and the Senate. Unfortunately, the House leadership turned out the lights, ended the conference committee, and said we will meet no more. What was usually a bipartisan and open and fair process disintegrated before our eyes. That is no reflection on the Senator from Mississippi. I have no idea what led to that. It occurred. It was clear that the problem was on the House side. We were making progress. We were making bipartisan decisions. The process broke down.

But with that said, I will vote for this bill, and reluctantly. I believe it will provide some relief for struggling farmers in our fragile farm economy.

The Illinois Department of Agriculture estimates that $450 million from the $8.7 billion agricultural relief package will directly benefit Illinois producers through receipt of 100 percent of the 1999 AMTA payments. I agree with the Senator from North Dakota. Using an AMTA payment is fraught with danger. I think it is an open invitation for every one of these investigative television shows to have fun at the expense of this bill and this decision process. When they find people who haven't seen a tractor in decades but have ownership of a farm receiving payments upward of $.5 million, they are going to say: I thought you were trying to help struggling farmers, not somebody with a trust account who has never been near a farm.

That may occur because we have chosen these AMTA payments. We should have done this differently. I think we are going to rue the day these payments are made and the investigations take place. But these AMTA payments will be in addition to the more than $450 million already received by Illinois farmers this year to help them through this crisis.

I voted for the Freedom to Farm Act. I have said repeatedly that I did not believe when I voted for that farm bill that I was voting for the Ten Commandants. I believed that we were dealing with an unpredictable process. Farming is unpredictable. Farm policy has to be flexible. We don't know what happens to weather or prices. We have to be able to respond.

You have to say in all candor as we complete this fiscal year and spend more in Federal farm payments than ever in our history that the Freedom to Farm Act, as we know, has failed. It is time for us, on a bipartisan basis, to revisit it, otherwise we will see year after weary and expensive year these emergency payments.

Look at the Illinois farm economy. My State is a lucky one. We usually aren't the first to feel the pain. God blessed us with great soil and talented farmers and a good climate. But we are in trouble.

Farm income in Illinois dropped 78 percent last year to just over $11,000 a year. That is barely a minimum wage that farmers will receive. That is the lowest net income on farms in two decades.

Incidentally, if you are going to gauge it by a minimum wage, as the Presiding Officer can tell you, farmers don't work 40-hour workweeks. When they are out in the fields late at night and early in the morning, they put in the hours that are necessary. Yet they end up receiving the minimum wage in my State of Illinois. That is down from $51,000 in 1997. That was the net farm income per family in that year. Lower commodity prices and record low hog prices in particular are primarily to blame for this net farm income free fall in my home State.

The Illinois Farm Development Authority recently noted that the financial stress faced by Illinois farmers today is higher than it has been for 10 years. Activity in the authority's Debt Restructuring Guarantee Program is four or five times higher than last year. They have approved 7 to 10 loans per month in 1998. In 1999, the authority has been approving 30 to 40 debt restructuring loans per month—a 300-percent increase. This is a record level unmatched since the 1986–1987 farm crisis.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has predicted that prices for corn, soybeans, and wheat will remain well below normal, and that farm income may drop again next near. Nationally, farm income has declined 16 percent since 1996.

On Saturday night in Springfield, IL, I went to a wedding reception and sat next to a friend of mine. I said: What is a bushel of corn going for now? He said $1.51. If you follow this, as they do every day in farm country, that is a disaster—$1.51 a bushel.

I said: How is your yield this year?

He said: It is up a little, but I can't make up for that decline in price.

That is what is coming together. That is the disaster in Illinois and in many places around the Nation.

The USDA is facing the largest farm assistance expenditure in its history. The Department of Agriculture processed 2,181 loan deficiency payments in 1997, about 2.1 million in 1998—1,000 times more—and they will work through a projected 3 million this year. Unfortunately, it appears that this crisis is going to drag on in the foreseeable future further draining USDA's resources and reserves.

I am going to address separately the whole question of the Ashcroft-Dodd amendment because I think it is one that deserves special attention. But I