

SENATE—Monday, April 26, 1999

The Senate met at 1 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Father, we have not forgotten the three American infantry soldiers who were captured on March 31 while on patrol at the Macedonian border: Staff Sergeants Andrew A. Ramirez and Christopher J. Stone; Specialist Steven M. Gonzalez. Be with them, Lord. Bless them with courage and strength. During this anxious time, give their families Your comfort and assurance. May these men and their families know that they are not forgotten and that the Senate is praying today for their safety and their release.

Here in the Senate we begin this new week with renewed trust in You and a commitment to work together for Your glory and for Your will in our Nation and in the world. Through our Lord and Savior. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able acting majority leader is recognized.

Mr. BROWNBACK. I thank the Chair.

SCHEDULE

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, today the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 3:30 p.m. Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 96, the Y2K bill. A cloture motion on that legislation was filed on Thursday, and by unanimous consent that vote will take place today at 5:30 p.m. Members are encouraged to come to the floor to debate this important legislation.

I thank my colleagues for their attention.

Mr. President, I wish to address the body today on another matter during morning business. It is about the situation that has taken place in Colorado.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KYL). The Chair will announce that under the previous order leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a

period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 3:30 p.m. with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Kansas is recognized.

Mr. BROWNBACK. I thank the Chair.

TEEN VIOLENCE

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I wish to address the Senate today on the subject of the violence in Littleton, CO. I note that over the weekend a number of funerals took place, and as I speak another funeral is occurring as a result of the shootings in Littleton, CO. I think it would be appropriate for us to observe a moment of silence for the victims of the shootings that took place.

(Period of silence.)

Mr. BROWNBACK. I thank the Chair.

Certainly, all of our thoughts and prayers are with the people in Colorado, across this country and across the world, who have been touched by the terrible tragedies in the shootings.

We cannot ignore the shootings that took place in Littleton, CO. I think we really must say that this time we will address these problems that are in our culture. They are here. We have a culture that glorifies violence and killing, where perverse things are put on television as normal. Ours is a culture that has far too much darkness in it.

Just listen to some of the words of the writers in various newspapers across this country when they have discussed today's culture. This was in last Thursday's Washington Post in the Style Section, mind you. Its headline: "When Death Imitates Art." It says:

Before Teenagers Commit Violence, They Witness It in American Culture.

Here is how the writer starts:

In what used to be the dark corners of our culture, there is now a prime time cartoon with a neo-Nazi character, comics that traffic in bestiality, movies that leave teenagers gutted like game, fashion designers who peddle black leather masks and doomsday visions. It's all in the open now, mass produced, widely available. Even celebrated. On countless PCs, killing is a sport. And there's Marilyn Manson, a popular singer who named himself after a mass murderer and proclaims he is the Antichrist.

Film, television, music, dress, technology, games: They've become one giant playground filled with accessible evil, darker than ever before.

Listen to this:

Consider: Of the last 11 major movies released on video since April 6, seven of them have violent themes. Among them, "Art Pupil," about a high school kid obsessed

with Nazism; "American History X" about the rise and fall of a skinhead; and "I Still Know What You Did Last Summer," a teen slasher sequel.

"There is no question in my mind that film and society interrelate," said Douglas Brode, a professor of film at Syracuse University and author of 18 books on the movies. "And not just films but music, video games, all of it. There is a connection. It may be tangential, it may be tight. Nobody knows for sure."

And so caution and perspective are urged.

It is surely one of the great debates of this decade: Does the culture simply reflect the dark, decadent times in which we live or is society this way because the cultural proprietors have run amok.

Listen to this from the Wall Street Journal, written by Peggy Noonan, a columnist. This was in last Thursday's Wall Street Journal. She writes this:

What walked into Columbine High School Tuesday was the culture of death. This time it wore black trench coats. Last time it was children's hunting gear. Next time it will be some other costume, but it will still be the culture of death. That is the Pope's phrase; it is how he describes the world we live in.

The boys who did the killing, the famous Trench Coat Mafia, inhaled too deep the ocean in which they swam. Think of it this way. Your child is an intelligent little fish. He swims in deep water. Waves of sound and sight, of thought and fact, come invisibly through that water, like radar; they go through him again and again, from this direction and that. The sound from the television is a wave, and the sound from the radio; the headlines on the newsstand, on the magazines, on the ad on the bus as it whizzes by—all are waves. The fish—your child—is bombarded and barely knows it. But the waves contain words like this, which I will limit to only one source, the news.

Then she goes through and lists:

. . . was found strangled and is believed to have been sexually molested. . . .

There are a number of headlines, and they finish this portion by saying:

This is the ocean in which our children swim. This is the sound of our culture. It comes from all parts of our culture and reaches all parts of our culture, and all the people in it, which is everybody.

Listen to this from the New York Times today:

By producing increasingly violent media, the entertainment industry has for decades engaged in a lucrative dance with the devil.

That was in the New York Times today. It goes on to describe a process that our young people are going through, that a former Army officer talked about being desensitization, conditioning of people, being able to do heinous violent acts that they are taking culture conditioning through a movie, music, the Internet that just constantly bombard them and it desensitizes them to the humanness surrounding them.

Dave Grossman, a former Army officer and professor at West Point and also the University of Arkansas, says that these are the same techniques that were used to great effect during the Vietnam War to increase the "firing rate"—that is, the percentage of soldiers who would actually fire a weapon during an encounter from the 15 to 20 percent range in World War II to as much as 95 percent in Vietnam.

Grossman has written "On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society," in which he discusses how conditioning techniques were used to teach Vietnam-bound soldiers.

And then it goes on and he says many of these same techniques are involved in our culture today.

Mr. President, we have got to address this. It is time to do something. I think we in the Senate have to say we are not powerless to address this. We can fight back, and we must fight back. We know this is going on in the culture today. We know it is out there. We know what is happening. We know what happened in Columbine. We also know, most of us across the country, it is likely to happen again somewhere else, in some other good high school, in some other place where this never should happen, as it has happened in the past in Paducah, KY; Pearl, MS; other places; Jonesboro, AR; across this country. We can and we must fight back, and now is the time to do it.

I suggest two solutions. No. 1, anybody listening or watching, let's all pledge that we will change our culture, our individual culture we are involved in right now, what is it that is going on in our family, in our community, in our school, wherever we are within our culture that is part of this, and let's change it. We are not helpless to changing this. What is coming into your home right now? Do you have things coming into your home right now that are violent, that are of a nature with which you wouldn't agree, or over the Internet, magazines, video games, movies, television? We are not powerless to stop it coming into our homes. Let us all pledge to stop it.

I hope that many people across this country will start societies for cultural renewal within their communities where people can come together and say we are going to change the culture in our community; we are not going to wait on producers out of California; we are not going to wait on Washington to do this; we are going to change the culture here, now; we are going to bind together and we are going to say, what can we do in our community to reduce teen suicide, to reduce child abuse, to reduce out-of-wedlock births, to reduce the violence, the drug use, to reduce those sorts of things in our culture.

Let's not wait until it comes to us. Let's start binding together as people and forming societies to do this now. We can do it. If 10 people in any community of a limited size, say, of a quarter million, would come together and say, we are going to change the culture

in our community, they could start this in their community and they could get it done. With passion, with prayer, with people of commitment, they could do it. It could happen. They could move forward. They can change their culture. We can each change our culture. Let us open our eyes and see what is happening.

The second thing I think we in the Senate need to do is create a special commission on cultural renewal. We need to address this topic. We in the Senate should have a high-level commission of people from multiple walks of life searching for the answers to two questions: One, what made this culture the way it is? How did we get to this point we are today? What made us this way? Second, and more important, how do we change it?

I will be hosting a hearing on May 4, asking about the marketing of violence, in the Commerce Committee. There we are going to be asking people to address the point about the marketing of violence in our society and how it is being used to sell various products and what we can do to stop it.

I want to be clear, too. We obviously have limits in government, and government is part of the culture, but it is not the total culture. Government is limited. This is much more about all of us joining together to say we can change these sorts of things. We want to highlight some problems such as what is taking place in the marketing of violence. Why are companies doing this? What is their mode of operation? How can we dissuade them from doing this? Because it has a profound effect throughout this culture, as the people in Littleton, CO, know all too well, as we know all the rest of the way across this Nation.

Cultures change, and we must determinedly change ours, not so much by laws as by changing our thinking about what we consume. We can do it. We must do it. We will do it. It is time we do it.

I am afraid people are getting to the point of wondering if we can. Yes, we can. As the culture moved in this direction, it can assuredly move away from it. But it is going to take a determined effort. It is going to take an effort not just of saying OK, Washington is going to solve it, or Hollywood is going to solve it, or New York is going to solve it. We each have to dig in and try to solve it in our own community, and we need to address it from here, too.

I will be pressing this on the leadership of the Senate, that we do have such a high-level special commission so we can get at these issues: How did we get to where we are? How do we get away from this? How do we solve it? And we can.

I thank the Chair, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative assistant proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I would like to just briefly mention a couple of issues this morning.

First, I would like to comment on some of the statements made this weekend, especially by the Senate majority leader, but by others as well, dealing with the issue of Social Security.

This weekend, on a Sunday talk show, our colleague, Senator LOTT, indicated that he felt that the issue of Social Security reform was dead for this Congress.

Vice President GORE this morning expressed the fervent hope that this is not the case. I would join the Vice President in saying that it is not good public policy for our country to give up on the important task of reforming Social Security.

The Social Security program has been a critically important program for our country. It has made life so much better for so many older Americans for so long. The problems of our Social Security system are born of success—not failure. The success is that people are living longer and better lives in our country. At the start of this century, you were expected, on average, to live to be 48 years old. Now, at the end of the century, you are expected to live on average to about 78 years of age—a 30-year increase in life expectancy.

For a lot of reasons—better nutrition, breathtaking breakthroughs in medical science, better medical facilities—a whole series of things contribute to the success. But the result of the success is that people are living longer, and that puts strains on the Social Security system. But we ought not shrink from the challenge of those strains.

We can solve this issue. We can make Social Security solvent for at least the next 75 years and beyond. Let's not at this point decide that the 106th Congress cannot deal with the Social Security challenge. Of course we can.

President Clinton and Vice President GORE made a proposal at the start of this Congress. Just as a starting point, they put forward a proposal to let us sink our teeth into this issue, and make it a priority.

I know there is a lot of controversy about how you might reform and change and improve the solvency of the Social Security system for the long term. But I think the best way to approach this—I agree with Vice President GORE—is for both parties to resolve that this shall be a priority; we,