

as strong as death." I know it is stronger. I saw it.

As time passes, we need to make sense of the Columbine killings. The media are already filled with "sound bites" of shock and disbelief; psychologists, sociologists, grief counselors and law enforcement officers—all with their theories and plans. God bless them for it. We certainly need help. Violence is now pervasive in American society—in our homes, our schools, on our streets, in our cars as we drive home from work, in the news media, in the rhythms and lyrics of our music, in our novels, films and video games. It is so prevalent that we have become largely unconscious of it. But, as we discover in places like the hallways of Columbine High, it is bitterly, urgently real.

The causes of this violence are many and complicated: racism, fear, selfishness. But in another, deeper sense, the cause is very simple: We're losing God, and in losing Him, we're losing ourselves. The complete contempt for human life shown by the young killers at Columbine is not an accident, or an anomaly, or a freak flaw in our social fabric. It's what we create when we live a contradiction. We can't systematically kill the unborn, the infirm and the condemned prisoners among us; we can't glorify brutality in our entertainment; we can't market avarice and greed . . . and then hope that somehow our children will help build a culture of life.

We need to change. But societies only change when families change, and families only change when individuals change. Without a conversion to humility, non-violence and selflessness in our own hearts, all our talk about "ending the violence" may end as pious generalities. It is not enough to speak about reforming our society and community. We need to reform ourselves.

Two questions linger in the aftermath of the Littleton tragedy. How could a good God allow such savagery? And why did this happen to us?

In regard to the first: God gave us the gift of freedom, and if we are free, we are free to do terrible, as well as marvelous things . . . And we must also live with the results of others' freedom. But God does not abandon us in our freedom, or in our suffering. This is the meaning of the cross, the meaning of Jesus' life and death, the meaning of He descended into hell. God spared His only Son no suffering and no sorrow—so that He would know and understand and share everything about the human heart. This is how fiercely He loves us.

In regard to the second: Why not us? Why should evil be at home in faraway places like Kosovo and Sudan and not find its way to Colorado? The human heart is the same everywhere—and so is the One for whom we yearn.

He descended into hell. The Son of God descended into hell . . . and so have we all, over the past few days. But that isn't the end of the story. On the third day, He rose again from the dead. Jesus Christ is Lord, "the resurrection and the life," and we—His brothers and sisters—are children of life. When we claim that inheritance, seed it in our hearts, and conform our lives to it, then and only then will the violence in our culture begin to be healed.

In this Easter season and throughout the coming months, I ask you to join me in praying in a special way for the families who have been affected by the Columbine tragedy. But I also ask you to pray that each of us—including myself—will experience a deep conversion of heart toward love and non-violence in all our relationships with others.

Mr. BROWNBACK. It is time we address this. It is time we address it strongly. It is time we address it clearly and ask two questions: How did we get here, and how do we get out? This is not the culture we were raised in and this is not the culture we want our kids to be in, as one of our colleagues, Senator LIEBERMAN, put it. I hope we can start the change and renew our culture and start to do that by renewing ourselves.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. BAUCUS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The distinguished Senator from Montana is recognized.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND FINANCE

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I rise to note that this week the world's finance ministers and central bank presidents have gathered in Washington for the annual meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. I suspect that Secretary of the Treasury Rubin reminded us last week that, despite the hype about the end of the world's financial crisis, we are just at the starting point of making those structural changes necessary to put the globe back on a solid growth path.

Obviously, it is critical to repair the global financial system, and Secretary Rubin has been the leader in this with excellent ideas. But there is a whole other piece, which we can't ignore; that is, the need to maintain and expand an open trading system. Take a look at some troubling trade statistics released last week.

First, the United States merchandise trade deficit in February hit an all-time record—over \$19 billion. Imports into the United States are growing faster now than at any time in the last four years. Furthermore, American exports are lower than they were just one year ago. And remember that one billion dollars in exports equals about 12,000 jobs.

Japan and China seem to be in a race to see who will have the largest deficit with us. Japan's trade deficit with the United States in February was over \$5 billion, while China's was a little under \$5 billion.

There is more. Another troubling statistic was the World Trade Organization announcement that last year the world's exports grew only 3.5 percent. That compares to a 10.5 percent growth rate in 1997. And they expect the growth of world trade to slow down even further this year.

Third, and this is even worse news, while imports into North America were up 10.5 percent, our exports from North America, which means mainly the United States, rose only 3 percent last year. That is, imports rose three and a half times faster than exports.

All this means that the world economy is surviving by exporting a lot to us while importing less and less.

Why is this?

A major reason is that our economy is so much stronger today than any others. This is due to American economic strength and competitiveness, as well as to the global financial turmoil that has hurt so many of our trading partners.

But another significant reason for the growing trade deficit is the continuing discrepancy between the openness of our market versus the openness of others. It is true that once the world emerges from the financial crisis and global recovery begins to kick in, these numbers will change somewhat. However, the trade barriers that existed prior to the start of the global financial crisis are still there today and will still be there tomorrow.

If Secretary Rubin and other financial leaders succeed in their efforts, foreign economies will pick up later this year or next. We should see an increase in our exports as those economies need American capital goods and start buying more consumer products. But, economic recovery overseas does not mean that trade barriers will disappear. We must deal aggressively with barriers to our goods and services to take advantage of this opportunity for greater export growth.

That is why we must always keep market opening and trade liberalization on the top of our national agenda, aggressively negotiating new agreements, insisting on full implementation of existing agreements, and repairing those aspects of our trade law that are not working.

Our farmers, manufacturers, and service providers are the most efficient in the world. They must have the same freedom to do business overseas that foreign businesses have in our country. And it is the duty of the Congress and the Administration to ensure that those opportunities exist.

We have all been pretty frustrated by the European Union's unwillingness to abide by WTO decisions on beef and bananas. In fact, Europe's reaction to the WTO beef hormone decision is to become even more protectionist. We have also been frustrated by Japan's unwillingness to implement its trade agreements with the United States. A recent study concluded that Japan was implementing fewer than one-third of those agreements.

One possible bright side to this picture, however, lies in the WTO negotiations with China. USTR, USDA, and other agencies have done yeoman's work over the past month. I hope the agreements made thus far with China hold together and the negotiations underway can bring it to a conclusion. We have an opportunity to expand significantly American exports in many sectors—agriculture, manufacturing, and services, for example. Another example of this is the Pacific Northwest wheat agreement, which has been a problem

for us in the Pacific Northwest. China now agrees that we will be able to sell our Pacific Northwest wheat to China.

Mr. President, I firmly believe that opening markets is profoundly important for our national well-being. But it requires persistent, aggressive, high-level attention at all levels of our government. I will do everything in my power to ensure that this is done.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative assistant called the roll.

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

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

HANDGUNS IN AMERICA

Mr. TORRICELLI. Mr. President, last week the sense of security that Americans had in their own communities, our sense of the strength of our culture, our ability to protect our families and our homes, was once again shattered.

The challenge did not come from Kosovo, and it was not from a computer problem with the new millennium. It was from the most basic form of human violence, striking us where we are most vulnerable, and taking the life of a child.

James Agee once wrote that in every child who is born, no matter what circumstances or without regard to their parents, the potentiality of the human race is born again. It may be because of the sense we possess that our own renewal is in the life of our children that the death of a child shakes us so dramatically. Rarely have we seen an America more traumatized by individual acts of violence than as a result of the murders in Littleton, CO.

All of us recognize that there is no one answer, no one explanation for this tragedy. The answer lies in the strengths of our families, the responsibility of parents, the roles of school administrators and parents and local police. Almost every critic has a point; virtually none has a complete answer.

The increasing level of violence in the entertainment industry, the new use of technologies which have sanitized the very concepts of death and murder, the failure of role models, the growing isolation of children from parents and siblings and extended families—all critics are right; no criticism is complete.

But in this constellation of problems there is the persistent issue of access to guns in American society. Only a few years ago, when a similar tragedy rocked the United Kingdom, the British Parliament responded in days. A gunman killed 16 students in Dunblane,

Scotland. The Parliament was outraged. The British people responded. And the private ownership of high-caliber handguns was not regulated or controlled; it was banned.

This Congress can rightfully cite a variety of challenges to the American people to ensure that Littleton never occurs again, though, indeed, we failed to do so after Jonesboro, Paducah, Springfield, and a variety of other cities and schools that had similar tragedies.

Now the question is, Do we visit upon this tragedy the same silence as after those other school shootings, or do we have the same courage the British Parliament exhibited 3 years ago in dealing with this problem?

The amount of death that this Congress is prepared to witness before we deal realistically with the problems of guns in America defies comprehension. Last year, 34,000 Americans were victims of gun violence. But the year before and the year before that, for a whole generation, the carnage has been similar. Every year, 1,500 people die from accidental shootings. Every 6 hours, another child in America commits suicide with a gun. No gun control can eliminate all of this violence. I do not believe any gun control can eliminate a majority of this violence. But no one can credibly argue that some reasonable gun control cannot stop some of this violence.

I am heartened that the majority leader has promised the Senate that within a matter of weeks there will be a debate on this floor and an opportunity to present some reasonable forms of additional gun control. At a minimum, this should include the question of parental responsibility for children who get access to guns. Where parents have knowledge or facilitate that purchase, they must bear some responsibility for the likely, in some cases inevitable, consequences of minors having those weapons.

Second, there is the question of whether or not minors should be able to purchase certain weapons at all. It is arguable that a minor should not be able to purchase a handgun. It is irrefutable, in my judgment, that a minor should not be able to purchase a semi-automatic weapon.

Third, the question of whether, through the new technologies of the Internet, it is appropriate that guns be sold or purchased in any form; if it is not an invitation to violate and avoid existing State and Federal laws; if a person does not have to present themselves in a retail establishment with credentials to purchase a weapon. Remote sales, in my judgment, should not be allowed.

Then there is the larger question of the regulation of all weapons through the Federal Government—whether, when we live in a society where everything from an automobile to a child's

teddy bear has regulations on their designs and materials to ensure safety, that same regulatory scheme should not be used for weapons; whether a weapon is designed properly to assure its safety; whether its materials are the best possible; whether technology is being used to ensure that the gun is used properly.

One can envision that the Treasury Department or another Federal agency would require gun manufacturers to have safety locks so that children could not misuse them. Future technology may allow a thumbprint to ensure that only the owner of the gun is using the gun. More basic technologies might require better materials or that a gun does not misfire when it is dropped. Proper regulations might ensure how these guns are sold, to ensure that they are sold properly, that State gun laws are not being evaded by oversupplying stores on State borders with permissive laws so that they are sold into States with restrictive laws. Inevitably this must be part of the debate: the proper Federal role in ensuring the proper design and distribution and sale of these weapons.

I am grateful, Mr. President, that the majority leader has invited the Senate to participate in this debate; proud, if the Senate responds to the challenge.

There were so many prayers throughout this country for the victims of the shooting in Littleton, sincere prayers on the floor of the Senate. The victims and their families and traumatized Americans need our prayers, but they need more than our prayers. They need the courage that comes from a people who recognize that change is both possible and required to avoid these tragedies from repeating themselves.

The victims of Littleton will be grateful for our prayers, but they will curse our inaction if political intimidation, the fear of change, results in the Senate offering nothing but prayers. This Senate has a responsibility to respond. We know what needs to get done. The President of the United States has challenged us. Americans are waiting and watching.

Every Senator must use these next few weeks to think about how they will vote, searching their own consciences on how they will answer their constituents, their families, and themselves, if Littleton becomes one more town in a litany of forgotten schools, forgotten children, and a rising spiral of carnage.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, what is the business before the Senate?