

whom I happen to have a tremendous amount of respect. I will certainly get a chance to talk with him today. I believe that we are making a big mistake if we simply put this money into a conference report, which means there will not be any real discussion and no real debate. We will not have paid any attention whatsoever as to how we can allocate this financial assistance out there in the countryside so that the lion's share of the benefit goes to the farmers who are in greatest need.

Why in the world do we want to use the same AMTA formula which gets subsidies out to farmers in inverse relationship to need? Why not some careful consideration and some careful discussion? Isn't that what we are about as legislators?

Too many times now in the Senate we see the same pattern of important decisions not being made by virtue of taking, in this particular case, what I think is an important question and just putting it into a conference report with no opportunity for amendments and no opportunity for discussion. I think that would be a big mistake. Instead, we can surely decide on a better formula for getting the money out there to the people. At the very minimum, it ought to go to the producers. It ought not go to landowners who are not even involved in production.

Again, we have an opportunity for fiscal year 2001 to literally talk about equity and at least get the loan rate up for other farmers and other grain farmers that are equal to what we do for soybeans.

As a Senator from Minnesota, as a Senator from an agricultural State, I come to the floor today to take issue with the direction in which we are going and to urge my colleagues not to put this financial assistance money into the crop insurance bill. But instead let's do the kind of work that we ought to do as legislators. Let's do the kind of evaluation we ought to do as legislators so we can get the help out there to people who need it.

Farm income is going to go down 17 percent again this year. There are a lot of farmers in my State. Many are going to be driven off the land.

If we are not going to write a new farm bill as an alternative to this "freedom to fail" bill, which is one of the worst pieces of legislation ever passed by the Congress or ever signed by a President, then I don't think we are going to write a new farm bill until after the election. At the very minimum, we ought to do our best to get the assistance to the people who need it the most.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. I ask unanimous consent to speak for 10 minutes.

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

(The remarks of Mr. BAUCUS pertaining to the introduction of S. 2617 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. WELLSTONE. How much time remains on the Democratic side?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Fourteen minutes.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I ask unanimous consent for 5 minutes to speak in morning business.

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

#### BANKRUPTCY CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, sometimes we use morning business to have a chance to speak about legislation we introduce. Sometimes we use morning business to make a plea to colleagues. Sometimes we use morning business to convey a message. I want to convey a message to some Senators about conference reports and the way we have been conducting our business.

Right now with the conference reports—and I am specifically talking about the bankruptcy bill—we don't have a conference committee. We have a shadow committee because Democratic Senators are not involved at all in the deliberations. There are some rumors going around in the Senate that Republicans will basically reach an agreement on the conference report on bankruptcy. Democrats will not be involved in this deliberation at all. So we have not had a conference committee meeting. We will know what is in that conference report when it is on our desk.

That conference report dealing with bankruptcy, believe it or not, American public, could be put into an unrelated conference report such as a conference report dealing with crop insurance. There is no longer any scope of conference rule so it can be completely unrelated. Again, that is a new way of doing business in the Senate. My argument is that is no way to do business in the Senate.

I believe the minority should be involved in the conference. That is a real conference. I do not believe the way to do business is for Democrats to find out what is in the bill when it is put on our desk. I certainly don't think this bankruptcy bill—which is so harsh and so egregious in its effect on the most vulnerable citizens in the country, while basically calling for no accountability or responsibility on the part of the big credit card companies—should be put into an unrelated conference report such as one dealing with crop insurance.

I use my time as a Senator today to say to Senators that if that happens, and I hope it won't, if that should happen tomorrow, for example, when we are supposed to go on recess, I think

that would be outrageous. I will oppose it. I will speak out against it and do everything I can to block it. We would be here for days. I think there are other colleagues who will be also outraged, especially at this effort to put a shadow conference report on bankruptcy, with Democrats not even being involved—and all the reports are that the bill is getting harsher and harsher, not better—into an unrelated conference report with a day to go before we are supposed to go into recess. If that happens, I want to be clear, I don't intend to be jammed. I do not intend to roll over on it. I intend to speak out against it. I intend to point out to the American people all the ways in which this is egregious legislation and the impact it will have on them and their families. That will take time. I think other Senators will join me.

I hope we do not conduct our business that way in the Senate. I hope I do not have to do that. I hope, instead, we will do what we need to do with the legislative branch and with judicial nominations, with the nomination of Brad Smith, have those votes, get onto other work, but not have last minute efforts to sort of jam legislation into unrelated legislation and attempt to ram it through here without the deliberation and without the discussion.

I do not think that is the Senate at its best. I certainly, as a Senator from Minnesota, cannot represent people in my State and people in the country that way, and I will not. I will challenge it. So I hope it does not come to that.

I yield the floor.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. 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. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is my understanding we have until 10:30 in morning business on the Democratic side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

#### GUN CONTROL LEGISLATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, a little over a year ago in Littleton, CO, at Columbine High School, there was a shooting incident which shocked America. We saw in that high school an event which we did not believe could happen in the United States, where students could get guns through a gun show, go into a high school filled with other students, and open fire, killing 12 or 13 students and injuring many others. It shocked America's conscience.

As a result, the Senate began to consider gun control legislation—frankly,