doing that—and I decided against it for the moment—we ought not to call it normal trade relations with China, or Japan, or, for that matter, Europe; we ought not to call normal trade relations a circumstance that give us a $50 billion, $60 billion, $70 billion, or $80 billion trade deficit. There is nothing normal about our trade relations with Japan. There is nothing normal about having a $50 billion, $60 billion, or $70 billion trade deficit every single year. That is abnormal. Now, I could not get the votes, perhaps, to rename that ''abnormal trade relations,'' but it is not normal, and we ought not to consider it normal to have this sort of circumstance exist.

In the last decade, it has gotten worse, not better. The mantra of so-called ''thinkers'' who are quoted—incidentally, they are the same people because when reporters write the stories, they call the same people, ''thinkers''. These same people have put the same quotes in the stories every month for 10 years. Even though the times have changed and the thinkers were demonstrated to not be accurate, they just change their story. That is why the story has changed now from their original saying that when we had a budget deficit you are therefore going to have a trade deficit. They say now that wasn't it; now it is because we are growing too fast. There must be some familial relationship here with the Chairman of the Fed because he also thinks we are growing too fast. It must be the same group of thinkers. There must be a genetic code that exists between these folks.

Again, I digress. I came to the floor to simply say I don't want Friday's notice of this dramatic increase in the trade deficit to not be discussed at least at some length in the Senate. It is important that we discuss it and begin to provide remedies for it.

Mr. President, how much time remains?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There are 2 minutes remaining.

ISSUES FOR THE SENATE TO CONSIDER

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, there are a lot of issues in the Senate with which we ought to be dealing. Most of the important issues we are avoiding. Now, there exists in this Congress something called a Patients' Bill of Rights. It is in conference and we can't get it back. Why? Because big money interests have decided they want to block it; they don't want a Patients' Bill of Rights. We ought to have that on the floor of the Senate and the House, out of this conference, and we should pass a decent Patients' Bill of Rights.

We ought to be able to employ the opportunities to offer amendments on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act when it is here and strengthen this country's education system. But are we able to do that? No.

We also have a juvenile justice bill that is trying to close a loophole in gun shows. When you buy a gun, you have to run your name through an instant check to see whether you are a felon. If you are a felon, you don't have the right to own a gun. It would close the gun show loophole. Now you can go to a gun show and buy a gun and you don't have to run your name against anything. A felon can buy a gun, regrettably. That is not anti-gun; it is a moderate, thoughtful step to extend the instant check. That is in the juvenile justice bill. That is not on the floor of the Senate.

This Senate has been at parade rest for some long while. It is time to take action on the things the American people want us to act on. We ought to deal with a Patients' Bill of Rights, and we ought to bring to the floor of the Senate the legislation that deals with the gun show loophole in the juvenile justice bill. We ought to have an opportunity to debate the Elementary and Secondary Education Act without somebody hovering and saying: Before you do that, I have to approve the amendments you offer. There are no gatekeepers here. The rules of the Senate don't provide for gatekeepers.

In the coming months, we have the opportunity to address health care, education, juvenile justice, and things that matter in this country. The only reason they are not on the floor of the Senate with extended debate, or out of conference which exists now, is because the leadership doesn't want them on the floor of the Senate. I must say that in the coming weeks and months we intend to do everything we can possibly do within the rules of this Senate to make sure those are the issues we debate in the Senate this year.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 1 p.m. shall be under the control of the Senator from Wyoming, or his designee.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BENNETT). Without objection, it is so ordered.

A RECORD OF OBSTRUCTIONISM

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, this morning I listened to my friend, the Senator from North Dakota, talk about what we ought to be doing in the Senate. I must tell you I couldn't agree more that we need to be moving forward. I also must tell you I have a totally different view as to why we are not.

We have actually been seeking to move forward for some time. The Republicans have had a number of critical issues out here that the American people are interested in—marriage tax penalty relief, tax relief in other areas, farming, education, and critical needs of the men and women in the armed services. But, unfortunately, as each of these things has come up, we found ourselves being stopped from moving forward either by unrelated amendments or objections to moving forward. I really think we should analyze where we are and what we are seeking to do.

In my view, in general terms, what is happening is that there is more of an interest, particularly on that side of the aisle, in simply trying to create issues rather than create solutions. Each time we bring up a basic bill, we come back to amendments that have already been dealt with, and they insist on dealing with them again.

The majority leader is trying to deal with a number of issues. One of them, of course, is education. We are dealing with the whole question of elementary and secondary education. We are blocked by that side of the aisle from meaningful educational reform. We are trying to deal with the idea of moving forward with the kind of funding the Federal Government can provide for elementary and secondary education.

There is a difference of view. Yes, indeed, we have a difference of view. The basic difference of view is to the extent the Federal Government is involved in the funding of local schools. Those local schools, their leaders, the school boards, and the counties and States ought to have the basic right to make the decisions as to how that money is used. I think it is pretty clear that the needs are quite different.

Yesterday, I spoke at the commencement of a small school in Chugwater, WY. The sign on Main Street said ''Population 197.'' There were 12 graduates at this school. They come from, of course, the surrounding agricultural area. I can tell you that the educatioonal needs in Chugwater, WY, are likely to be quite different from those in Pittsburgh. The notion that in Washington you set down the rules for expending the funds that are made available in Federal programs we do not think is useful. I understand there are differences of view.

But I guess my entire point is that we are always going to have different points of view and we should have an opportunity to discuss those and opportunities to offer alternatives. But we have to find solutions, and we have to move forward. That is why we vote. That is why there is a majority that has a vote on issues. But the idea that you have a difference of view and, because you don't get your view in, it is going to stop the process is not what we are talking about.

Education, of course, is just one of the areas. There is the question of the marriage tax penalty and the question of tax relief and tax reform. But, quite frankly, more than anything, there is the question of fairness—where a man and woman can work at two jobs before