

People have a right to focus on pension and health care benefits. People have a right to be concerned about the contracting out of jobs. They have a right to be concerned about the trade agreements, as a matter of fact.

That is why the workers in Flint, MI, are on the picket line today, and that is why, as a U.S. Senator from Minnesota, I strongly support these workers who are out on the picket line.

NOMINATION OF JAMES HORMEL

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I read today in the paper—and I am not quite sure where we are headed, and I always look forward to having a chance to meet and talk with the majority leader, agree or disagree, on all issues—but I read in the paper the majority leader said he didn't think he would have time to bring up the nomination of James Hormel. That is a terrible mistake.

I have spoken on the floor. I said after the tobacco legislation, I was looking for an opportunity to offer an amendment. Frankly, on the basis of discussions I had with a lot of different people, I decided that it would be better to wait because I was hoping, if you will, that cooler heads would prevail on this matter and we would figure out a way to bring this nomination to the floor.

If it is a debate or discussion, it will be a good debate and good discussion. Too much of the climate has become too poisonous. If the majority leader is basically shutting the door on any action on the floor of the Senate—I hope he isn't; I guess that is my plea to the majority leader: I hope you have not done that—I want to find out as soon as possible. Then, I believe, it will be important for some of us to bring amendments to the floor and, basically, one way or another, have a debate and have an up-or-down vote.

Every Senator is entitled to their own opinion about whether or not James Hormel would be an able Ambassador to Luxembourg, and every Senator is entitled to a vote. I am entitled to my opinion, and I am entitled to a vote. I think the majority of us—well over 60 of us—would vote to confirm this nomination.

I cannot see anything in Mr. Hormel's record—anything in his record, anything in his record—that would disqualify him from this job. I see someone with an enormously successful background in education—that means a lot to me; education has been my life's work—a very successful business person, philanthropist, and very active in the legal profession. For the life of me, there is no reason to stop this nomination, except for the fact—and if this is the fact, let's get it out in the open—that he is gay. If that is what troubles colleagues, come out here and say it. If colleagues want to say he is gay, or if they want to say he has been too outspoken on gay causes, then let's get that out here.

Too many comments have been made in the last several months—made here, there—and I don't think that is good for the Senate. Frankly, the failure of the U.S. Senate to at least bring this nomination to the floor and have an honest discussion and an honest debate—frankly, this is less about Jim Hormel than it is about the Senate. The Senate is far more on trial than is Jim Hormel. This is not good for this institution. If this is just a case of discrimination against somebody because of their sexual orientation, we all have to look ourselves in the mirror. If not, fine, we will have the discussion, we will have the debate, and we will have the vote. But I don't think, as much as I might respect the majority leader or respect his prerogatives, necessarily his word would be the final word, at least in terms of a discussion and a debate. My hope is, we can figure out a way of bringing Mr. Hormel's nomination to the floor and that there will be a vote.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. WELLSTONE. Finally, Mr. President, seeing no other colleague on the floor, I want to talk about this more in detail and in depth when we have the Commerce-State-Justice appropriations bill before us, which I think will be in the next day or so. I am working on an amendment—I hope it can be ready—that actually evolves from a piece of legislation I have been working on for some time dealing with mental health in children.

I have been very lucky to have done a lot of the mental health work with Senator DOMENICI from New Mexico, my Republican colleague. He has certainly been more of the leader than I have, but I have been honored to work with him.

Mr. President, I went on a visit—I will talk about this in more detail, in more depth later—to Lula, LA, about 2 weeks ago as a Senator. I think it was some of the best work I have done as a Senator outside of Minnesota—the best work is in Minnesota. I wanted to go there because I have read some Justice Department reports about the need for real dramatic improvement in the conditions affecting these children.

I see pages here. This is a corrections center, and the kids that are here in the center range in age from 11 to about 18. A lot of the kids I talked to were 14, 15. I did talk to several 11-year-olds as well. I went down there determined—I talked to both of my colleagues from Louisiana, not to sort of say, well, how terrible, Louisiana; only in Louisiana. I do not believe that for a moment. I think we can do a lot better.

My focus had to do with mental health and children. The estimates now made by the Justice Department—there was a pretty powerful front-page story in the New York Times that was written last week that I will get in the RECORD when I offer this amendment.

But the fact of the matter is, the estimates are that about 25 percent of the kids here struggle with mental problems. Many of them actually never committed a crime. I mean, they would be picked up, they would run away from home, be out in the street. A very small percentage committed a violent crime; I guess probably less than 10 percent, closer to 5 percent. I will talk about that in a moment.

But what happens is that these facilities—and this is certainly what happened in Lula—become a dumping ground with kids struggling with mental illness. They should not be there in the first place. To compound the problem, they are there, but with no treatment. And to compound that problem, it becomes pretty brutal with them. They should not be there.

I went to Lula—and, again, I am going to be very careful as not to speak with that much emotion because there is plenty to be emotional about, but to just give a report on the floor of the Senate. I will focus on this again in more detail with the amendment so my colleagues know what the amendment is about.

In the administrative building there were a lot of people from Louisiana that were there, a lot of officials, which was fine. I met the new warden, whom I believe is trying to make changes. He just got there, so it would be unfair to pin any of this on him.

I wanted to go to the solitary confinement cells because I also heard kids were locked up in solitary confinement as many as 23 hours a day for as long as 6 or 7 weeks. I wanted to know which kids. I wanted to know, What does a kid do to be put in solitary confinement like this? What is the criteria you use? I wanted to know more about that.

Initially, we negotiated, and the idea was I would get there, but first I would start off with kids who were eating lunch. I went in, and it was interesting. There were kids eating lunch. I also say, since I think race is still a reality in America, my guess is over 80 percent of the kids of about 500-plus kids were African American. I do not know what the population is in Louisiana—certainly nowhere close to 80 percent.

Kids were eating, and I went up to some kids who were eating, and I just said, "How are you doing?" This one young guy said to me, "Not that good." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, you see this food?" By this time lots of officials were with me. He said, "See this food?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "We never eat this food. We never have a meal like this. This is just because you're here."

He said, "The table—smell the paint. This was just painted. These tables don't look like this." He said, "These clothes I have on,"—I am just reporting what he said to me—he said, "These clothes I have on, they just gave us this stuff last night. These aren't the clothes we usually wear. It's hot. There's no air conditioning. You