pass through angst and anxiety and pain and suffering and all the other things, it tends to make an open and democratic society make tough, thoughtful decisions about its future.

We have abolished slavery. We have survived depressions. We have defeated Hitler. We have cured polio. We have sent people to the Moon. I mean, we can talk a lot about what this country has endured and what this country has done.

My only point is, I do not think any of us ought to at this point in time be discouraged about democracy and about Congress and about our Government and about the press and about all the institutions in our lives. It is a good place to be. I do not know of anybody who wants to go elsewhere. I do not know of anybody who wants to exchange it for some other location in the world.

We should not be discouraged. Our job, it seems to me, is to do our work for the American people. And there is plenty of work to do. I have mentioned some—education, health care, finish the job on fiscal policy, deal with highways, deal with campaign finance reform, and more. And that is just a start.

I am here and I am ready, and I hope my colleagues feel the same. We ought to join hands and say there are things that Democrats and Republicans believe in and can do together. And we will be persuaded to do that if we can just turn off the rap music, turn off the rap that one side is all wrong and the other side is all right, one side is big spenders and the other side is not.

I finally say this. I do not think there is a plugged nickel's worth of difference between the two aisles in the U.S. Senate—Republicans and Democrats—in terms of how much they want to spend. Is there a difference on what they want to spend money for? Absolutely. But I will guarantee you, for everybody who stands up on one side of the aisle wanting to spend money on one program, there is somebody on the other side standing there saying, ''No. I want it spent on my priorities.'' What we need to do is join together and, through this process, find the right priorities for this country's future.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. WELLSTONE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended for 10 minutes.

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

The Senator is recognized to speak for 10 minutes.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I thank the Chair.

ARTICLE BY ROBERT REICH

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that an article in this past Sunday's New York Times magazine, ''When Naptime Is Over, The placid public mood is an illusion. Real Issues rumble beneath the calm and could soon send a wake-up call,'' by Robert Reich, former Secretary of Labor, be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows;

[From the New York Times Magazine, Jan. 25, 1998]

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO POLITICS?

(By Robert B. Reich)

There's no longer any political news, a reporter friend confided recently, explaining why ''human interest'' stories were oozing like syrup across his newspaper's front pages. We're in the Bland Decade now, a time when citizens march on Washington not to affect politics but to vow they'll be better people and when politicians speak out mainly to urge niceness: volunteer your time, enter into dialogues on race, hire someone off welfare, please. Apparently we need little more than charity, moral uplift and perhaps a modest program or two. Politics is dead, or so it seems.

The easiest explanation for this torpor is that the nation is fat, like an overstuffed bear starting hibernation. It's no longer the economy, stupid. Six years ago, a prolonged recession hurt white-collar workers, giving some urgency to the politics of ''change.'' Prosperity, though, is a powerful sedative. Forget politics for now, we seem to be saying. Let's compare stock portfolios, banter about culture and identity and tut-tut over problems decades hence, like an insolvent Social Security trust fund or excessive greenhouse gases.

The great economic contests have been won. Communism vanished before it was even vanquished. The Japanese competitive threat is now a sorry heap of bad debt. European welfare states heave under double-digit unemployment. And here in the land of plenty we've never had it so good. Wealth is exploding, unemployment is at a 24-year low, inflation is quiescent (the Federal Reserve Board chairman, Alan Greenspan, publicly raised concerns about *deflation*), the stock market is riding high. American capitalism is the envy of the world.

But look more closely and the easy explanation falls short. Most Americans don't have it so good. They have jobs, but most wages and benefits are stuck or continue to drop. Wealth has exploded at the top, but the wages of people in the bottom half are lower today in terms of purchasing power than they were in 1989, before the last recession. This is in sharp contrast to every previous recovery in the postwar period. Corporate downsizing and mass layoffs are still the order of the day, which partly explains why so few workers demand raises in this tight labor market. They'd rather keep their jobs.

The reality is that Wall Street's advance hasn't been widely shared. The richest 1 percent hold more than 35 percent of the nation's wealth. The typical middle-class family has no more than $7,000 in stocks and $12,500 in mutual funds, according to a 1995 survey by the Federal Reserve and the Treasury Department. Even the recent market surge isn't likely to have changed this very much, given what has happened to wages.

Whatever savings Americans do have are imperiled by hospital bills. A growing portion of the public lacks health insurance—in 1989, 33 million Americans under age 65 were without it; by 1996, 41.3 million. (The President's proposal to extend Medicare coverage to early retirees and displaced workers as young as 55, which would be the largest expansion in 25 years, is expected to add only 300,000 to the rolls.)

Despite the boom, inequality has widened. The nation's poverty rate is slightly higher than it was before the last recession. In 1989, 12.6 million, or 19.6 percent, of the nation's children lived in poverty; now it's 14.5 million, or 20.5 percent. The Conference of Mayors reports rising demand for food and shelter among the homeless. And the successes of the civil rights movement notwithstanding, today's urban schools are more racially segregated than in the 1980's.

So why, then, the prevailing political somnolence? Traditional politics has been all about who's gaining and who's losing. Yet it has lately become unfashionable, indeed in poor taste, to notice such things. In the present upbeat climate, downbeat data are slightly subversive. It is necessary to minimize all worry about the economy lest the public lose confidence, a perfect tautology. Bankers and business leaders have become cheerleaders in the nationwide pep rally. Onward! Upward!

Recent polls show, accordingly, high rates of consumer confidence. A record 40 percent of consumers queried in the Conference Board's December survey called jobs ''plentiful,'' although, tellingly, only 28 percent expected their own wages to rise. These are the ones who have heard the distant roar of surging wealth and assume that the rising tide will lift them, too—which may explain the record level of consumer debt. Personal bankruptcies are also at a record high.

Will politics revive when the economic tide ebbs and hardships appear like shipwrecks on the tidal flats? Not necessarily. Even in 1992, with the nation mired in recession, political engagement was grudging. Americans wanted ''change'' to get the economy moving again. But there was no sense of moral urgency. It was simply time to replace old management with new. Most Americans had long before stopped believing in government as a force for much good in their lives.

Some people will say we don't need a vital politics to be a vital society. We can expand the circle of prosperity through grass-roots moral activism, spearheaded by community groups, socially responsible businesses, not-for-profits, religious organizations and compassionate individuals—perhaps all deftly linked by fax and modem, a ''virtual'' social movement. Commentators rightly stress the importance of such civic engagement. But they make a serious mistake labeling it as an alternative to politics. Throughout our history, civic activism has been the precursor, and the propellant, of political movements.

Almost a century ago, American politics appeared similarly listless despite growing social problems. As today, the economy was booming, jobs were plentiful and vast fortunes were being accumulated. Yet real wages had stopped growing, and the gulf between rich and poor was widening into a chasm. New technologies (steam engines, railway locomotives, the telephones, steam turbines, electricity) were transforming the nation, pulling families off the farms and immigrants from aboard and depositing many into fetid slums. Wall Street magnates were consolidating their empires. Government was effectively bought by large corporations, and the broad public was deeply cynical. William McKinley won re-election—legened has it, on a pledge to ''stand pat''—and as the century closed, the nation seemed politically comatose.

Within three years, however, there was an outburst of reform: muckrakers like Lincoln

Steffens and Ida Tarbell exposed corruption, and the middle class demanded fundamental change; small businessmen railed at monopolies; Wisconsin's crusading Governor, Robert La Follette, enacted legislation regulating health and safety in factories; Oregon limited the hours of work for women (no more than 10 per day); Theodore Roosevelt, McKinley's energetic Vice President who took over after McKinley was assassinated, set out to bust the trusts; suffragists marched; campaigns were organized for pure food and drug laws, workers' compensation and a minimum wage. Politics gained new life and meaning.

What happened? Indignation, which had been rising steadily, suddenly burst out and flooded the country. Citizens were already active at the local level, as they are today. Common morality simply couldn't abide the way things were going. Yet instead of opting for revolution or radical change, Americans preferred to spread the benefits of the emerging industrial economy, thereby saving capitalism from its own excesses.

Another foreshadowing occurred in the placid Eisenhower era. The overall economy was doing nicely then as well, even though its benefits had not reached the rural poor, many of whom were black. Politics had grown inert. Ike golfed. In 1954, the Supreme Court decided that separate schools were not equal. In 1957, Eisenhower dispatched Federal troops to Little Rock's Central High School. But who could have predicted that within a few years the civil rights movement would have remolded American politics with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965?

The next revival of American politics can be expected to follow a similar course. The current economic boom has bypassed too many; the gap between winners and losers has grown too wide. Fortunately, there is a common morality at the heart of this capitalist democracy that ultimately keeps us on track and keeps us together. Glimpses of it can be had even in these languid times. For example, a majority of Americans supported last year's increase in the minimum wage to $5.15, although only a tiny fraction stood to benefit. It was a matter of simple fairness. Or consider the broadscale indignation stirred up by revelations of garment sweatshops.

We got another glimpse this summer, when a sudden groundswell of support forced a skinflint Congress to extend health care to millions of children. And a majority of Americans supported the United Parcel Service strikers, not because the public is particularly fond of organized labor but because it seemed unfair for U.P.S. to pay its part-time work force so little.

Recall also the firestorm when, almost exactly two years ago, AT&T announced it was firing some 40,000 employees and then gave the boss stock options that raised his total compensation to $16 million, from $6.7 million. Recall, by contrast, the celebration of Aaron Feuerstein, the owner of Malden Mills in Lawrence, Mass., who, after his synthetic-fleece business burned to the ground, assured his employees that he'd stick by them until the factory was rebuilt.

The pressure keeps rising. A final glimpse came just before the holidays, when the public signaled unease about giving the President ''fast track'' authority to whisk trade treaties through Congress without amendment and most members of the House of Representatives, including many Republicans, refused to support it. That may be a mistake. Trade is good for America. But the public's negative reaction shouldn't be seen as a repudiation of free trade. It was, at bottom, a matter of fairness: trade hurts some people, and we haven't made adequate provision for the losers.

Trade may, in fact, be the precipitating issue this time around. The economic implosion in East Asia will continue to reverberate here, as bahts, won, rupiahs, ringgit and yen drop in value relative to dollars—one of the biggest price-cutting contests in world history. American consumers will have the benefit of bargain-basement sales, but the cheap imports will put additional downward pressure on the wages of lower-skilled Americans. The tumult also will crimp profits of American companies that export to the region, causing more layoffs here. If the Asian flue turns more deadly, the infection here will be all the worse. However resolved, the Asian crisis portends larger jolts, as the global economy absorbs the surging output of 1.2 billion Chinese—more than a fifth of the world's population. When the current recovery ends, the underlying reality will be starkly evident and the political debate surrounding trade will intensify.

To an extent, that debate has already begun. The tension between economic nationalism and globalism is emerging as one of the most significant fissures in American politics, and it runs through both parties—as shown by the current dispute over financing for the International Monetary Fund.

But it would be unfortunate indeed if the revival of American politics were to turn on the question of whether the nation should engage in more or less commerce with the rest of the world. The underlying choice is larger, more important and more subtle: ultimately, we must decide whether we want to slow the pace of globalization or else take bold steps to help today's losers share in the benefits of the new economy. I cannot predict the outcome of that great debate to come, but I can express a clear preference. It is that we expand the circle of prosperity and that we do so on a scale that matches the challenge.

A new nationalism founded on shared prosperity might, for example, support ''re-employment insurance'' that would enable people who lose their jobs to move to new ones with far less disruption and pain than is the norm today. (If the new job paid less, half the difference should be offset for a year by a wage subsidy.)

In that spirit, we could enlarge and expand the earned-income tax credit—a reverse income tax that makes work pay if you're at or near the bottom. We could bring a larger portion of the next generation into the circle of prosperity by rebuilding decaying schools and helping states equalize spending between rich and poor school districts. And we would make sure that everyone has access to adequate health care and child care.

To finance all of this—and move beyond the small, feel-good programs that lack adequate scale to make much of a difference—we could simply reverse the current trend in public finance and adopt a truly progressive tax system (including payroll taxes).

None of this will come easily or without a fight. But in the end, the nation will be stronger and better for bringing everyone, or nearly everyone, along. Future historians looking back on the Bland Decade will conclude that, as before, American politics wasn't really dead. It was only caught napping.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank the Chair. It is really a superb article.

THE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I want to just speak briefly. I think we are all back. As the Senator from North Dakota said, I think most of us really are focused on the legislative work, Democrats and Republicans. I think that people want us to be focused on our work. But our work is connected to our conversations with people in our States, what people have said to us, and trying to connect what we do as legislators to the betterment of the lives of people that we serve.

Mr. President, I was impressed with Secretary Reich's piece because I have found in my travels in Minnesota and around the country that while all of the macroeconomic statistics look good—for that I am grateful; the GDP and other indicators of economic performance, the official levels of unemployment, a record low, so on and so forth—that in many ways we have a paradox which is that we also, at least since we started collecting social science data, we have the most stratification in our society that we have ever had.

We have the most glaring inequalities, and I think we have been moving to two Americas. It is not the other America that Michael wrote about in a very important book in 1963 about poverty, which I know the presiding officer has been concerned about, but it is two different Americas.

You have one America with mounting access to all the things that I suppose you could say make life richer in possibilities, and you have another America struggling to make ends meet.

You have one America that is barreling down the information superhighway, and you have another America without even the rudimentary skills to participate in our economy or to participate in our polity or to participate in our society.

You have one America with the economic resources to purchase the security of gated communities, living in gated communities, and you have another America that is beset by the decay of some of our very important social institutions which we have to rebuild if we are to rebuild communities, libraries, hospitals, and schools.

You have one America that is focused on a booming stock market, and you have another America that is faced with the insecurities of a job market still with all of the downsizing and the latest news about AT&T, I think, laying off 18,000 employees.

You have one America that every summer sort of plans a trip to Asia or Europe, and you have another America where the discussion is, ''How can we scrape up enough money to take the family to a ballgame?''

Mr. President, I find that, in just touring the cafes in Minnesota—I want to draw from my data, which is now less social science data and just conversations with people. You know, most people in the country—poor people, middle-income people, professional people, it does not really matter—from really almost all walks of life, I think first and foremost, are very focused on how they can earn a decent living and how they can give their children the care they know their children need and deserve.