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AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCH ARSON

(Mrs. CLAYTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, there have been 32 suspicious fires at African-American churches across the United States since 1995. It is time for Congress to stand up and speak out.

Last Thursday, when the Matthews-Murkland Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, NC, became another one of the churches to be burned over the past 18 months, the shock and amazement of this deed left me dazed and numb.

How could anyone violate what is most precious to our society? That is why I want to urge all of my colleagues to use this week to rise in swift and resounding voices to condemn this evil and to demonstrate that it will not be tolerated.

First, we should all support the bipartisan legislation introduced by our colleagues, Mr. COWERS and Mr. HYDE. That legislation would make it easier to bring prosecutions and stiffen the penalties against those who target houses of worship.

Second, I would urge support for a resolution I am introducing, calling on the collective outrage of Congress and condemning the arson. And, finally, we should all work within our respective communities to help prevent future arson.

There is a time to keep silence and a time to speak. Now is a time to speak.

THE ANSWERS AND EXCUSES, MY FRIENDS, ARE BLOWING IN THE WIND

(Mr. FUNDERBURK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FUNDERBURK. Mr. Speaker, how many FBI files must a President search before he becomes a President? Does it take to gather an enemies list?

But, Mr. Speaker, let us look at the facts. The Republican budget that has been presented for fiscal year 1997 slashes the President’s request for veterans’ funding by $573 million. Our Nation’s veterans deserve better than empty Republican rhetoric.

Mr. Speaker, let us quit playing games with this special group of citizens and get down to the hard work of establishing and maintaining meaningful programs and benefits for our veterans.

MR. HEFLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, during the 1992 campaign, Bill Clinton was asked to sign a waiver that would have authorized the FBI to make public any files that revealed his anti-Vietnam war activity. He refused.

But after the election, after Bill Clinton was in the White House, suddenly all of his anxieties about looking into other people’s FBI files disappeared into thin air. Someone at the White House authorized a search of 341 Reagan and Bush administration employees. The White House passed this off as a mere bureaucratic mistake; an oversight not to be repeated; really, just a small matter that is not worthy of a serious examination.

Whether it is a Democrat or a Republican, anyone who uses the power of the FBI to target political opponents is not only wrong, they may have committed a crime. We should be doing our job, Congress, to stand up and speak out.

WHITE HOUSE “SO WHAT” RESPONSE

(Ms. WATTS of Oklahoma asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Ms. WATTS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, it was reported over the weekend that the Clinton administration had used the FBI to obtain the confidential records of former Reagan and Bush administration employees. The White House passed this off as a mere bureaucratic mistake; an oversight not to be repeated; really, just a small matter that is not worthy of a serious examination.

Mr. Speaker, I long ago stopped trying to figure out the Clinton administration. Their response to any accusation of improper or illegal activity is always the same: So what.


Mr. Speaker, the White House’s “so what” response to the improper or illegal use of the FBI only confirms that they are hiding something from the American people.

REPUBLICANS SERVING WARMED-OVER VERSION OF REJECTED MEDICARE PLAN

(Ms. WOOLSEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I, for one, give the new majority credit for