

Now, how is that a level playing field? The simple answer is it is not a level playing field, and the unfortunate result of provisions like this would be the loss of even more United States jobs.

Mr. Speaker, poorly negotiated trade deals with Panama are one of the main reasons our country finds its production base shriveling, our unemployment rolls rising, and our economy in shambles.

Passing this agreement is bad for America, especially at this perilous economic time, and I would encourage this administration to rethink its position before it asks Congress to approve this Panamanian trade agreement.

Mr. Speaker, with that, before I close, I do want to ask God to continue to bless our men and women in uniform in Afghanistan and Iraq. I want to ask God to please bless the families who have given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq. And I close by asking God to give wisdom and strength to the President of the United States. And I ask God to continue to bless America.

□ 1515

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WATSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. WATSON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCHENRY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

CURRENT CONDITIONS OR JUST A BAD DREAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PAUL. Could it all be a bad dream, or a nightmare? Is it my imagination, or have we lost our minds? It's surreal; it's just not believable. A grand absurdity; a great deception, a delusion of momentous proportions; based on preposterous notions; and on ideas whose time should never have come; simplicity grossly distorted and complicated; insanity passed off as logic; grandiose schemes built on falsehoods with the morality of Ponzi and Madoff; evil described as virtue; ignorance pawned off as wisdom; destruction and impoverishment in the name of humanitarianism; violence, the tool of change; preventive wars used as the road to peace; tolerance delivered by government guns; reactionary views in the guise of progress; an empire replacing the Republic; slavery sold as liberty; excellence and virtue traded for

mediocracy; socialism to save capitalism; a government out of control, unrestrained by the Constitution, the rule of law, or morality; bickering over petty politics as we collapse into chaos; the philosophy that destroys us is not even defined.

We have broken from reality—a psychotic Nation. Ignorance with a pretense of knowledge replacing wisdom. Money does not grow on trees, nor does prosperity come from a government printing press or escalating deficits.

We're now in the midst of unlimited spending of the people's money, exorbitant taxation, deficits of trillions of dollars—spent on a failed welfare/warfare state; an epidemic of cronyism; unlimited supplies of paper money equated with wealth.

A central bank that deliberately destroys the value of the currency in secrecy, without restraint, without nary a whimper. Yet, cheered on by the pseudo-capitalists of Wall Street, the military industrial complex, and Detroit.

We police our world empire with troops on 700 bases and in 130 countries around the world. A dangerous war now spreads throughout the Middle East and Central Asia. Thousands of innocent people being killed, as we become known as the torturers of the 21st century.

We assume that by keeping the already-known torture pictures from the public's eye, we will be remembered only as a generous and good people. If our enemies want to attack us only because we are free and rich, proof of torture would be irrelevant.

The sad part of all this is that we have forgotten what made America great, good, and prosperous. We need to quickly refresh our memories and once again reinvigorate our love, understanding, and confidence in liberty. The status quo cannot be maintained, considering the current conditions. Violence and lost liberty will result without some revolutionary thinking.

We must escape from the madness of crowds now gathering. The good news is the reversal is achievable through peaceful and intellectual means and, fortunately, the number of those who care are growing exponentially.

Of course, it could all be a bad dream, a nightmare, and that I'm seriously mistaken, overreacting, and that my worries are unfounded. I hope so. But just in case, we ought to prepare ourselves for revolutionary changes in the not-too-distant future.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

SECRET BALLOT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. The secret ballot is fundamental to free and fair elections—and they're the hallmark of the democratic process. Most every time Americans go to the polls to vote, they do so by the means of a secret ballot. Secret ballots protect the voter's privacy and allow the individual to vote his or her conscience without fear of reprisal from those who disagree with the voter's decision.

As a Nation, we celebrate when the citizens of other countries who were previously denied to vote in free and fair elections are finally able to do so. We watched with pride several years ago as Iraqis braved terrorist threats to cast their vote by secret ballot.

Mr. Speaker, if the secret ballot is used by Americans in local, State, and Federal elections, if the secret ballot is used by citizens of other nations for which American soldiers have sacrificed, don't American workers also deserve this fundamental right?

If you can ask Kansans, they will say, Yes, workers do deserve the right to a secret ballot election. A recent poll found that 65 percent of Kansans surveyed believe that the secret ballot should remain in use for union organizing.

Yet, despite the centrality of the secret ballot to our conception of fairness and public support for its use, many in Congress are pushing for the passage of legislation that would do away with this longstanding principle. In its place, the Employee Free Choice Act would allow unions to form if a majority of workers signed authorization cards—a process known as “card check.”

Without giving workers the protection of a secret ballot, each person's choice would be known to others. It is not unreasonable to believe that those who choose not to sign authorization cards would be subject to intimidation and coercion.

While this should be reason enough to defeat the Employee Free Choice Act, the legislation is further flawed. Provisions within the legislation require a mandatory arbitration process that would allow the Federal Government to dictate contract terms on businesses if a first contract is not agreed to within 120 days. The contract would be binding for 2 years and would cover decisions that are best left to company leaders that understand the specifics of that business and are most familiar with the competitive forces that the business faces.

In these difficult economic times, the government-imposed and -written contracts would have an especially devastating impact on businesses that would further delay our economic recovery. Allowing the government to impose contracts on private firms and their workers would effectively allow the government to pick winners and losers in the marketplace.

The Employee Free Choice Act is bad for workers and bad for the economy.