

Despite the disheartening atmosphere in which he matured and grew, Chavez became the type of leader only of which there are a few.

The needs of his people fell upon uncaring ears.

And through his fight for liberation, there fell many, many tears.

Although many Mexicans were helped by Cesar Chavez in bringing an end to their plight,

He emphasized that his crusade was for all people, it was not just a Mexican fight.

Chavez's organization of unions attracted many powerless people who would not confront the growers who proved to be formidable,

But to gain liberation, he was surely capable.

Because of his efforts in trying to help the California farm worker, his movement gained empathy from much of the nation,

But there was still prejudice from many, many people against the workers in the organization.

In order to form the union, Chavez went from door to door.

In the end, when the workers had gained their liberation, it did not matter that they were all poor.

After spending five years of his life for his people's liberation, Chavez finally succeeded,

But these rights were by far not easily gained, but greatly needed.

THE FIRST 100 DAYS

HON. MARTIN OLAV SABO

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 5, 1995

Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share my deep misgivings on the first 100 days of the 104th Congress, the first 100 days of Republican Party control, and the most grim 100 days I have served as a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

On September 27, 1994, the national Republican leadership, led by Congressman NEWT GINGRICH, proposed a Contract With America. They pitched it as a magic formula for everything that ails us. Eliminate crime. Reduce the deficit. Increase defense spending. Cut taxes on the rich. On April 7, 1995, the Republicans led by the new Speaker, NEWT GINGRICH, will celebrate their accomplishments.

But what are the true accomplishments of the Republican leadership? And who are the primary beneficiaries? The answer to these questions might surprise the average taxpayer.

The Republican Contract With America was advertised with great sounding slogans including: The "Fiscal Responsibility Act," the "Taking Back Our Streets Act," the "Personal Responsibility Act," the "Family Reinforcement Act," the "American Dream Restoration Act," the "National Security Revitalization Act," the "Senior Citizens Fairness Act," the "Job Creation and Wage Enhancement Act," the "Common Sense Legal Reform Act," and the "Citizen Legislature Act."

As I reflect on these bill titles, it is hard to imagine how anyone could be against such straightforward proposals. However, hidden behind these clever and appealing names are very dangerous efforts to systematically employ a reverse-Robin-Hood scheme—to take

from the most vulnerable in our society and give to the most affluent.

"JOB CREATION AND WAGE ENHANCEMENT" OR CUTTING TAXES FOR THE RICH?

The Republican tax cut proposal, or the crown jewel of the contract, benefits mostly those at the upper end of the income scale. The capital gains tax cut is a boon to wealthy investors—with more than three-quarters of this tax cut going to people with incomes of more than \$100,000. The child tax credit will be given to families with incomes of up to \$250,000 a year. When taken together, these tax cuts are clearly skewed to the privileged few who already have the most wealth.

For example, consider two average families that decide to spend their tax savings on education. The family earning less than \$75,000 a year would be able to pay for about three-quarters of the cost of books. Their tax break would be \$432 a year. But the family earning more than \$200,000 would be able to pay for all tuition and fees, books and supplies, room and board, transportation, and every other cost of a public college. Their tax break would be \$11,266 a year.

On the whole, the wealthiest 10 percent of families get 47 percent of the benefits. The wealthiest 1 percent get 20 percent of the benefits of the tax cuts. That is simply not fair.

Even if you look only at the child tax credit, the trend is the same. The Republicans were careful to make the credit nonrefundable. This means that lower income families could not receive the full \$500 per child tax credit because their tax burden is not high enough, but those earning up to \$200,000 would get a full tax credit. A full 35 percent of American children will receive no benefit from the children's tax credit: Thirty-four percent because their family's income is too low and only 1 percent because their family income is too high. Further, by the year 2005 the so called children's tax credit will account for less than a quarter of the overall tax cuts.

At the same time, the Republican leadership has proclaimed that they would not bring up a tax bill until they could pay for it, but that is not what is happening here. They do eliminate and slash some very important Federal programs, but they still do not cut enough to pay for their extremely expensive tax cuts. In fact, the combined effect of their tax and spending cuts will increase the deficit by \$12 billion in the year 2000.

Besides being misdirected and extremely expensive what are some of the offsets? Not surprisingly, they take money from programs designed to assist those with the least income.

"PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY" OR TURNING BACKS ON THOSE MOST IN NEED?

Recent action on welfare reform provides a particularly vivid display of the Republicans' attitude toward disadvantaged Americans. The new majority voted in favor of a rash attempt to reform welfare by dismantling the safety net that protects children and their families.

Virtually every American agrees that the current welfare system must be reformed. Most of us also have a clear vision of what a successful welfare system would accomplish: It would put people to work. Yet, the Republican plan overlooks this goal. Instead, it cuts finding for child care and weakens Federal support for job training programs. The Republican plan would actually make it more difficult for people to get jobs than it is under current law.

Unfortunately, the damage does not stop there. This legislation seeks to slash spending on programs that provides school lunches to hungry children and protect children from child abuse and neglect.

If we are to measure the success of welfare reform by its effectiveness in putting people to work and its capacity to protect children from the dangers of poverty, the Contract With America clearly fails.

"TAKING BACK OUR STREETS" OR TAKING POLICE OFF THE STREETS?

The Republican crime bills take funds Congress designated last year for an additional 100,000 police on America's streets and crime prevention programs and reallocates it to build more prisons. If we can keep more cops on our streets and more kids out of trouble, we won't have to keep building more jails. It is naive to believe that we will solve America's crime problem by warehousing the criminal element in our society. We must reach out to the inner cities and other high crime areas with policies that help stop criminal activities before they begin. The Republican approach of building more prisons at the expense of police and prevention programs will never attack the true root of America's crime problems.

"COMMON SENSE LEGAL REFORMS" OR LIMITING JUSTICE FOR THE COMMON PERSON?

Without a doubt, certain aspects of our Nation's legal system need to be changed. Too many lawsuits are being filed in America's courts. Unfortunately, many of the provisions found in the commonsense legal reform package don't make much sense. The contract tort reform legislation is an assault on the safety of the American people. If enacted, this legislation would result in more unsafe products, more injuries, and less compensation for those who are hurt because of corporate misconduct.

The bill's cap on punitive damages at three times the claimant's award for monetary losses—such as wages and medical bills—or \$250,000, whichever is greater, removes the incentives corporations currently have to avoid developing and marketing unsafe products. While \$250,000 may be enough to stop small mom and pop businesses from making unsafe products, Fortune 500 companies could simply incorporate the fine as a cost of doing business and sell dangerous goods. With such changes, would unsafe products such as the exploding Pinto become more common?

Not surprisingly, this legislation also discriminates against the most vulnerable members of our society. Under these same caps, a corporate CEO might be able to recover \$1 million in punitive damages while an elderly couple living on Social Security would have their damages limited to \$250,000. If this is commonsense legal reform, we need to redefine common sense.

"NATIONAL SECURITY RESTORATION" OR THE GREAT DEFENSE BUILDUP CONTINUED?

The Republicans' defense build-up bill, passed by the House in February is a startlingly simple-minded measure that calls for restoring defense spending to the historic highs of the 1980's. In this post-cold-war era, we must be smarter than ever in spending our defense dollars. We cannot afford to be so foolish as to resurrect the old star wars missile defense program and finance other inefficient and unnecessary military programs.

On a positive note, with the help of a handful of Republicans, House Democrats were successful in rejecting provisions of the legislation that would have required the old star wars antimissile defense system program to be deployed at the earliest possible date.

However, should this measure become law it will hamper the President's ability to deploy U.S. troops in U.N. peacekeeping operations. As we have seen recently, United States leadership and participation in international peacekeeping missions, such as in Haiti, have produced positive results. While not all such operations are equally successful, this bill would put the United States in the position of acting alone or not at all in such humanitarian missions.

The Republicans' plan would also require that budget firewalls between defense and other domestic discretionary spending be restored, in order to prevent defense cuts from being used to pay for domestic programs. With the overblown rhetoric in Congress supporting a constitutional balanced budget amendment, it astounds me that the restoration of these budget firewalls is being contemplated. If we are to seriously attempt to balance the Federal budget, defense spending must also be on the table.

"BUSINESS INCENTIVES" OR DISMANTLING ENVIRONMENTAL AND WORKPLACE SAFEGUARDS?

The regulatory rollbacks and new entitlements proposed by my Republican colleagues would have disastrous consequences for our environment, The Federal budget, and our legal system. First and foremost, if passed by the House, this legislation would wreck havoc on the valuable environmental protection laws that we have enacted over the past 25 years. Laws that are proven successes, such as the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Clean Air Act are all threatened in this bill.

The legislation also has the potential to explode the Federal deficit at a time when we are just beginning to bring it under control. The bill's takings provisions would require the Federal Government to compensate landowners when Federal actions affect their property values by 20 percent. The U.S. Constitution already protects private property rights. This proposal could create new liabilities costing the Federal Government billions of dollars. This new entitlement program is hardly in line with the downsizing of Government that the Republicans claim to support.

Finally, while the Republicans condemn excessive litigation in America today, this measure dramatically expands the scope of judicial review of Federal regulations, placing Federal courts in the unprecedented role of judging the scientific and economic merits of agency decisions. As past experience shows, this would clog America's courtrooms and give opponents of any new rule an ideal tool for creating gridlock in the regulatory process.

More bureaucracy, expanded Federal entitlement spending, additional work for already overburdened courts, and a rollback of protections for our health, safety, and environment are what America stands to reap from this crop of Republican regulatory reform proposals. While we must address the legitimate concerns of property owners, local governments, and industry, this is not the answer. We must find ways to increase regulatory efficiency and flexibility without compromising the environment or the health and safety of the American

public. These challenges are daunting, but the stakes are too high for us to fail.

"CREATING A CITIZEN LEGISLATURE" OR LIMITING VOTER CHOICE?

The Republican proposal to impose term limits on Member of Congress failed to pass because it was simply antidemocratic. Placing a limit on terms of service assumes that the American people lack the common sense and ability to decide if they want their Representative or Senators to continue serving. Imposing such limits abridges the fundamental right of all Americans to freely choose who will represent them. If the voters feel that someone has been in office too long, they can remove his or her at the ballot box. The last several elections prove this point.

Term limits are an emotional response to the notion that incumbents in Congress have become entrenched. The facts show, however, that a permanent Congress, as critics like to call it, is a myth. During the Reagan Presidency, for example, 55 percent of the House turned over. In other words, less than a quarter of the Members who were serving in 1980 are still in office. In just the last two elections, a total of 45 percent—196 members—of the House turned over. Further, the average number of years of service in today's Senate is 10.2 years, 1 year less than the average for the 103d Congress. Also since 1980, the political party whose majority controls the Senate has changed parties three times.

The antidemocratic nature of arbitrary term-limitation proposals should be reason enough to reject them, but there are also other reasons. While some turnover is healthy—and significant turnover already takes place—we also need experienced leadership. In today's Congress, we deal with very complex issues, and we need experts in Congress to address them. A new Representative, even one who has significant government experience, does not arrive in Washington with a full understanding of complex issues such as the budget, military weapons systems, and Federal housing policy. In many cases, it takes years to learn an issue fully. No one would want to turn their business over to entirely new management every few years, and it is audacious for proponents of term limits to contend that Congress is the only workplace in America where experience is inherently had.

Increasing the turnover rate of Members of Congress would also increase the power of staff members, lobbyists, and bureaucrats. In a Congress perpetually filled with inexperienced Members, these unelected yet highly experienced people would replace our duly elected Representatives as the true powers in Congress. That would betray what the Framers of the Constitution envisioned when they created Congress—the people's branch of Government—as the first branch of Government.

"FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY" OR CONSTITUTIONAL COVER?

In another attempt to tinker with the institution rather than deal with the real problems at hand, the Republicans sought to pass a balanced budget amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The majority party tried to perpetuate the myth that a constitutional amendment will erase the deficit and end all of our budget woes. The balanced budget amendment, which passed this House, was an attempt to escape political responsibility for the deficit. The Constitution did not create our budget problems, and changing it will not solve them.

The deficit is a problem created by politics, and one that must be solved by an exercise of political will.

The Constitution is our most valuable governing document and an expression of permanent policy. Amending it to deal with ever-changing economic conditions would be a grave mistake. In the words of Charles Schultze, a former Presidential economic advisor:

No Constitutional amendment can be written to cover the budgetary exigencies of the future. If interpreted literally, the amendment could lead to radically inappropriate budget decisions. . . . If interpreted loosely, the amendment would lead to a sharp deterioration in the quality of . . . governmental process generally.

As Members of the Senate defeated the amendment, they acknowledged that those of us who were elected must take responsibility for eliminating the deficit. Our job is to make these tough budget decisions—not simply to hope vainly that some constitutional machination will do the work for us.

In addition to their gimmick for a constitutional budget fix, my Republican colleagues want to shift more control to the White House by giving the President a line-item veto. This proposal also represents tinkering with our constitutional balance of powers. A measure such as this allows the President to substitute his or her judgment for that of 535 Members of Congress who are elected to represent all regions and viewpoints in our diverse Nation. While this measure is touted as a weapon against unnecessary spending, the line-item veto could backfire and actually increase spending under a strong President, such as Ronald Reagan or Lyndon Johnson. Our interests are best served by the give and take of the legislative process, not by granting new legislative authority to the executive branch.

THE FIRST "100 DAYS"—HISTORIC?

As the Republicans talk about the first 100 days and their Contract With America, they will undoubtedly boast of how historic it was and how much was accomplished. It's true that much legislation was passed in the House, but I will argue that it has not been good for our country.

The Republican majority seeks to shake the Federal Government at its foundations. But to what end and at what harm to the lives of Americans? If the Republican answer to our society's most difficult problems is to dismantle the Federal Government rather than develop real solutions, then perhaps the first 100 days of the 104th Congress was indeed historic.

The Republicans who set the agenda for the first 100 days should be recognized for their general contempt for the most successful democratic government in the world. In their haste and ideological purity, they would tear down basic protections for our quality of life and the safety net for our society's most vulnerable individuals. We should also be aware of their disregard for the wisdom of our Founders and their zeal to rewrite the U.S. Constitution to accommodate their political goals.

Haste rarely produces positive results in the democratic process. The House Republican leadership has had its 100 days in the spotlight. We must now take stock of this assault, and return our focus to governing for the good of the American people.