

COMMEMORATING GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

• Mr. BRADLEY. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate Greek Independence Day—a national day of celebration of Greek and American democracy. Yesterday marked the 175th anniversary of the beginning of the revolution which freed the Greek people from the Ottoman Empire.

A historic bond exists between Greece and America, forged by our shared democratic heritage. America is truly indebted to the ancient Greeks for giving the world the first example of direct democracy. The philosophical and democratic influences of the ancient Greeks provides the inspiration for our democratic Government to flourish. It is therefore fitting that Members of this Chamber join in paying tribute to the long struggle for freedom that Greece endured.

On March 25, 1821, when Germanos, the archbishop of Patros, proclaimed Greek independence, another link between Greece and the United States was forged. The American revolution served as a model for the Greek struggle for freedom and when the Declaration of Independence, translated into Greek, served as the declaration of the end of the Greek struggle, a circle was completed.

The interconnection between Greek and American democracies lies not only in the philosophical underpinnings of our Government, but in many areas of American life. Percy Bysshe Shelley once said, "We are all Greeks! Our laws, our literature, our religion, our art, have their roots in Greece." The tremendous influence that Greece has had on American life continues today through the activities of the vibrant Greek community in America. In every field—politics, entertainment, business and education—Greek-Americans continue to contribute to American life.

In particular, I wish to pay tribute to the Greek-American community in New Jersey. Groups that are leaders in the New Jersey Greek Community include: the Greek American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey, the Greek American Voters League of New Jersey, the Hellenic American Bar Association of New Jersey, the Pan Gregorian Enterprises & Foundation, P.G.E.I. of America Charitable Foundation, Inc., the Council Generals of Greek Cypriot, the Order of AHEPA and the Joint Public Policy Committee of Hellenic American Women. On behalf of these organizations, the Greek community in New Jersey and all Americans of Greek descent, I am honored to pay tribute, on behalf of the Nation, to the Greek community during the celebration of their independence day.●

CONGRATULATING THE LONDON- DERRY HIGH SCHOOL MARCHING BAND FOR BEING SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ROSE PA- RADE

• Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate the students of the Londonderry High School Marching Band and Colorguard who will be representing the State of New Hampshire in the 1997 Rose Parade next January. All the band members including Andrew Soucy, the band's director, deserve special commendation for their hard work and achievement.

Being selected for the Tournament of Roses Parade is quite an honor for a high school band. The Lancer Marching Band has a proud tradition of representing the Granite State in parades across the country. They have also performed in Washington, DC, for the St. Patrick's Day Parade, at Foxboro Stadium for the New England Patriots football team, and this will be the second time the Londonderry Lancers will appear in the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade. The Lancers should be very proud of their efforts because only the very best bands in the country are asked to participate in this nationally recognized New Years Day parade.

The young men and women of the Lancer Band and Colorguard demonstrate the hard work and dedication that is characteristic of the Granite State students. As special participants in the Tournament of Roses Parade, these students have proven that determination and teamwork are the hallmark of success both as musicians and students. We are honored to have the Lancer Band and Colorguard representing New Hampshire with their outstanding musical performances.

Mr. President, I want to express my thanks to both the students and faculty at Londonderry High School for their commitment to excellence. Congratulations again on such a magnificent accomplishment.●

SHERMAN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL, A 1996 NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

• Mr. ROCKEFELLER Mr. President, I want to take this opportunity to recognize Sherman Junior High School of Seth, WV. This institution was recently selected as a 1996 National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence by the U.S. Department of Education. It was 1 of 6 secondary schools in my State to garner this prestigious award, and 1 of only 216 public schools from throughout the United States to get this recognition.

Sherman Junior High School's motto is "We believe, we achieve, we succeed." It is thoughtful, provocative and obviously works. For if believing in yourself defines your ability to succeed, let me share with everyone a little taste of the tremendous feats this school has accomplished.

Sherman Junior High School is nestled in a remote southern portion of

my State in Boone County, a rural Appalachian county in our legendary coal fields. The geography of this region is challenging. The coal industry dominates the local economy and has a history of sporadic employment which affects the families and the community greatly, including school enrollment and student attendance.

There are more than 200 students enrolled in Sherman Junior High School and most of them have to be bused over narrow, rough roads within a 20-mile radius of the school. Many ride these buses for almost an hour each way, and more than half of the students qualify for free or reduced lunches. Because these students live in a rural, isolated area, the school is their primary center for most activities ranging from cultural events to sports which are crucial activities to help young people make the transition into adulthood.

Under the leadership and support of Principal John Hudson, the creative staff of Sherman Junior High shared their facilities with the local high school, but maintained their autonomy with a separate administration and faculty. This gives the students a sense of community, while also having access to more facilities and high school programs for students ready to accept more challenging programs. For example, many junior high students have an opportunity to learn basic computer and word processing skills. They can also take advanced academic classes, like a foreign language. Having enhanced opportunities obviously makes a difference in the lives of these young people, because almost 70 percent of the students of Sherman Junior High School score above the 50 percentile on their annual CTBS tests.

This is a time when public education faces many challenges—dwindling resources, intense public debates over the proper role of public education, and integrating new technologies into schoolrooms and teaching. Sherman Junior High is a school that is facing such challenges. The enthusiastic and caring teachers and administrators are committed to providing our students with the quality education. As a National Blue Ribbon School, Sherman Junior High is a role model on how teachers, administrators, parents, and students can come together and create an educational environment that helps young people excel. Every member of Sherman Junior High School should be proud of the accomplishments achieved. It is my pleasure to publicly congratulate this school for its community spirit and academic success. I know this school will keep up the good work, and continue to represent West Virginia proudly.●

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I come to this debate on the minimum wage from a different perspective than some of my colleagues here today. In January of this year, my State of Delaware decided to raise the minimum wage, after

a debate a lot like the one we are hearing today.

We like to think that Delaware is a special place, Mr. President, and in many ways it is. But it is also a lot like the rest of the country. We have big businesses and small, we have world-class high-technology businesses in chemicals and pharmaceuticals, a cutting-edge financial service sector and—a lot of my colleagues are surprised when I tell them this—a major agricultural sector.

With that kind of diversity, I think Delaware has something to teach the rest of the country. We are, after all, the first State to ratify the Constitution, so we think our example is worth following.

The proposal we adopted in Delaware is much like the one before the Senate today. The proposal before us today would call for a two-step increase in the minimum wage, from the current \$4.25 an hour to \$5.15. In Delaware, we also chose a two-step increase, from \$4.25 to \$5.00.

In my State, that increase will directly affect over 30,000 Delawareans and their families, 9.5 percent of the work force, just a little below the national average of 11.5 percent who currently work for the minimum wage.

So Delaware is like the rest of the country, Mr. President, just a little bit ahead of everybody else when it comes to addressing the problem of stagnant family incomes in general and the shrinking value of the minimum wage in particular.

And that is what I would like to talk about today, Mr. President—the puzzle of why, in a growing economy, with rising productivity and rising profits, a full-time job for hard-working adults has failed to provide a rising standard of living.

The minimum wage itself provides one important illustration of this disturbing trend. Since 1991, the last time we raised the minimum wage—with a bipartisan majority, Mr. President, and signed into law by President Bush—the real spending power of the minimum wage has dropped nearly 50 cents.

If we fail to raise the minimum wage, it will drop to a 40-year low when this year is over. Right now, you can put in a full 40-hour workweek, 52 weeks a year, and take home just \$8,840, just three-quarters of the poverty level for a family of three.

For those families, with a full-time worker, the current minimum wage is not even the minimum they need to stay out of poverty. That is something we cannot forget as we search for ways to convince more people to stay off of welfare and to turn away from crime.

There are, unfortunately, other examples of the declining rewards of hard work for so many American families.

It is not just those wage earners who are working to keep themselves and their families out of poverty who have seen their incomes stuck, who are running as fast as they can just to keep from falling further behind.

Mr. President, the median wage—the real middle income statistically speaking—is actually 5 percent less this year than it was in 1979. This is happening in an economy that has been growing at about 2.5 percent over the same time.

Where has all that growth been going? Who has gained from the growth in the economy? Between 1977 and 1992, the lowest 20 percent of American families saw their incomes drop 17 percent. But the top 20 percent enjoyed a 28-percent increase, and the top 1 percent saw their incomes shoot up 91 percent—virtually doubling.

So there has been growth, Mr. President, but the distribution of that growth among working families has been increasingly unequal.

Now, I for one do not think that human nature has changed all that much in the last 20 to 25 years. I do not think the richest 1 percent are suddenly twice as smart as they used to be, or that workers at the other end of the scale decided to become less productive.

Something else is going on, Mr. President, something more fundamental and far reaching than a simple business cycle, perhaps something we have seen only a couple of times before in our Nation's economic history. There is a lot of evidence that the economy no longer functions the way it used to, that it no longer provides the stable, middle-income jobs that built America's middle class after World War II.

As someone who has put his faith in the free enterprise system, Mr. President, I am inclined to see these changes as part of the way this system works—changing markets, changing products, changing skills have always been a key feature of the American economy.

But while Americans have a strong tolerance—even an appetite—for the dynamic shifts that characterize our economic system, they have an equally strong sense of fairness. Americans expect that hard work will be rewarded—not with riches, maybe, but certainly with a little security and a little comfort.

For far too many Americans, Mr. President, our system is providing far too much of those dynamic changes and far too little fairness.

I don't want my colleagues to forget that the absolute, bedrock requirement of our democratic system is the belief by the majority of our people that they are being treated fairly. Because this is not just a free enterprise economy, Mr. President, that we have here in America. We are blessed to have a system of popular government that provides and protects the property rights that are the foundation of our economy.

Take away that sense of fairness, take away the sense that at the end of the day, there is some justice in the way our capitalist democracy works, and people can start looking at other systems, other answers. The unhappy

history of this century provides too many examples for us to blithely dismiss this problem.

It is not too much to say that the real bottom line that we have to keep our eyes on is on the balance sheet of fairness. No amount of national wealth can buy that sense of fairness, no list of statistics can substitute for it.

As an optimist, Mr. President, I do not believe we are facing an insurmountable crisis. In fact, by my reading, a large part of our history has been a pretty successful search for ways to balance the changing demands of a dynamic economy with the unchanging demand for some basic fairness, for some simple justice, in the way we reward work.

We can make work pay, and make work a realistic alternative to the wasteful choices of welfare or crime, that will surely cost us more than the modest minimum wage bill before us today.

So I urge my colleagues to follow the lead of my State of Delaware. Restore some of the historical value of the minimum wage, some of the justice that is the real bottom line in America.

EDMUND SIXTUS MUSKIE

Mr. PELL. Mr. President, I join my colleagues in paying respect to the memory of former Senator Edmund Muskie. He was a very productive Member of this body and he made great contributions to its deliberations and to the welfare of our Nation. I admired him very much.

I first came to know Ed Muskie when he was Governor of Maine and a delegate to our party's national conventions. I always found him to be a person of great common sense and practicality, traits that reflected his years of experience in the Maine State Legislature and before that as a city official in Waterville.

He was always a highly effective advocate for the interests of New England, and in that role as in other aspects of his wide ranging Senate career, he was capable of displaying his sense of righteous indignation in the interests of producing results.

Perhaps his greatest and most lasting contribution was his work in securing enactment of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, and his subsequent service as the first chairman of the Senate Budget Committee. Here his practical vision saw the need for a consolidated legislative budget that coordinated and reconciled legislative appropriations with executive spending.

Ed Muskie's Senate career came to a sudden and surprising conclusion with his elevation to the office of Secretary of State in the Carter administration at the height of the Iraq crisis in 1980. It was a measure of Senator Muskie's stature in the Senate and in the Nation that President Carter turned to him at a time when circumstances called for a steady and authoritative hand.

It was a fitting climax to a career of exceptionally distinguished public service.