CANCER DETECTION, TREATMENT, AND PREVENTION

Our increased knowledge about cancer has led to dramatic improvements in screening, detection, treatment, and prevention. We are seeing a reduction in some cancer types directly resulting from these improvements. Doctors are able to routinely screen patients for cancers like breast, cervical, prostate and colorectal cancer. These tests help detect cancer in the earlier stages of development when the likelihood of successful treatment is best.

We are also seeing progress in the effectiveness of standard cancer treatments. Most cancers are treated first with surgical removal of the tumor and surrounding tissue, followed by radiation or chemotherapy to control spreading to other parts of the body. Less damaging surgical procedures are now an option; radiation can now be administered in a precise, pinpoint fashion; and the side effects of chemotherapy are now more tolerable thanks to new medicines that combat nausea, anemia, and immune suppression. More targeted therapies are also emerging. There are some experimental anticancer drugs, for example, which are better equipped to target a malignant tumor and kill the cancer cells while avoiding the healthy ones.

Researchers also stress the importance of prevention and education in reducing the number of cancer cases. Changes in lifestyle and eating habits as well as reduced exposure to chemicals in the work place have contributed to declining cancer rates. Cancer awareness has also paid off. People are much more conscious of cancer's early warning signs and when to seek treatment.

BUILDING ON OUR SUCCESSES

Much work remains to be done in our fight against cancer. While we are experiencing the first sustained decline in cancer mortality since the 1930's, several types of cancer are staying at the same levels or increasing, such as non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, melanoma, and brain and kidney cancers.

We must continue to strengthen our national investment in cancer research. One reason we have not made great strides in halting cancer deaths is that cancer is perhaps a hundred different diseases. It is just extraordinarily complex to deal with. The National Cancer Institute, the lead Federal cancer research body, will continue to focus its research efforts on understanding the genetic basis of cancer, improving early detection techniques, and developing better treatment methods.

CONCLUSION

The struggle against cancer has been long and hard and has produced very few dramatic breakthroughs, but the doctors and the scientists are slowly gaining ground. We have not found the magic bullet capable of eradicating cancer and may never find it, but what we are seeing is a succession of small incremental improvements that show great promise in controlling the spread of cancer, reducing the death rate and improving the quality of life for cancer survivors. As one doctor said, ''We're running a marathon, not a sprint.''

Note: The National Cancer Institute provides help directly to patients, their families, and health care professionals through its cancer information toll-free telephone service at 1–800–4–CANCER.

THE SPRINT—LA CONEXION FAMILIAR AFFAIR: JUSTICE DELAYED, AND DELAYED AGAIN

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 12, 1997

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, almost 3 years ago, on July 14, 1994, a great injustice was committed by one of the most powerful corporations in America—Sprint—against some of the least powerful among us. A union representation election was underway at a Sprint subsidiary which employed 177 Hispanic telemarketers who sold Sprint's long distance services to Spanish-speaking customers. Nearly all the workers at the San Francisco Sprint subsidiary, known as La Conexion Familiar ''The Family Connection'' [LCF], were women who had immigrated to the United States from Mexico and Central and South America. Many of them spoke only Spanish, which was no handicap in their specialized marketing jobs.

When it became clear to Sprint that the La Conexion Familiar workers would vote to be represented by the Communications Workers of America, Sprint suddenly shut the office—just 8 days before their union election. The announcement was made over the PA system during the workday, and the workers were gathered together to be searched by guards and sent out the door. The women were so shocked and upset that paramedics had to be called to the scene, and one worker was even admitted to a hospital.

The dreams of these workers were shattered and their jobs were summarily eliminated, simply because they wanted a union, and because they believed that in the United States, our labor laws would guarantee workplace democracy and the right to organize. One young woman described her ordeal this way at a public hearing on the shutdown held last year in San Francisco: ''For me, everything fell apart that day. I couldn't face being out of work. I started abusing alcohol. I was so depressed. I fought with my fiancé and I yelled at my children. After 2 years, I have another job now, but my experience at Sprint changed everything for me. I will always carry around the fear that I'll suddenly be fired for no reason.''

Mr. Speaker, more than 2½ years later, the National Labor Relations Board [NLRB] finally declared that the LCF closing was an illegal action and ordered Sprint to rehire the workers to comparable jobs with full back pay. Sprint immediately appealed the decision. It is expected that it will take between 1 and 2 years for the NLRB to hear the appeal and issue a final ruling. Of course, pending the appeal, none of the former LCF workers will receive the back pay or the jobs to which they are entitled according to the NLRB ruling. By dragging out this case and refusing to take responsibility for its actions, Sprint adds another chapter in a long and unfortunate tale of abuses against the LCF workers.

It was Sprint's discriminatory treatment of the LCF workers, along with sweatshop working conditions, that first drove the workers to try to seek representation. This Hispanic LCF workers were kept in a second-class status at Sprint—earning $7 an hour as compared to $11 an hour for regular Sprint telemarketers. The payment of commissions was arbitrary and discriminatory, and the workers complained. And Sprint managers restricted their visits to the bathroom, telling the workers to drink less water so they wouldn't have to go as frequently. When the workers started organizing for union representation, Sprint managers engaged in such blatantly illegal behavior to harass and intimidate union supporters that even the NLRB's investigators—investigators who have seen it all—expressed shock when they later reviewed the evidence.

During the long and drawn out legal proceedings in this case, the NLRB proved—and Sprint ultimately admitted to—scores of charges of illegal threats to close the office if workers voted for a union, of coercing workers to spy on other workers, and of interrogating and browbeating union supporters. Sprint's treatment of the LCF workers has been condemned by the Board of Supervisors of San Francisco, by dozens of my colleagues in the Congress, including the Hispanic caucus, and by government and labor officials in Mexico and Canada as well as in Germany, where Sprint is involved in a partnership with Deutsche Telekom.

Mr. Speaker, through its action, Sprint has gained itself an international reputation as a violator of our Nation's labor laws. Sprint should know that pursuing endless legal appeals is an unacceptable business practice. Unfortunately, this is a trend that is growing. I would like to include in the RECORD for the benefit of my colleagues a column by the distinguished president of the Communications Workers of America [CWA], Morton Bahr, which was published in the CWA News of February 1997. President Bahr's column, entitled ''Breaking the Law, Business as Usual,'' provides documentation of increasing labor law violations—specifically the growing use of plant closing threats—by American corporations to defeat union organizing drives.

The column follows:

BREAKING THE LAW, BUSINESS AS USUAL

(By Morton Bahr)

As philosophers and pundits ponder the breakdown of morality, social values and respect for law and order in America, maybe they should look at the example being set by elements of corporate America, such as the Sprint Corp.

The workers at Spring/La Conexion Familiar in San Francisco were determined to organize a union. Working in what came to be exposed as an ''electronic sweatshop,'' these Spanish-language telemarketing workers were so determined, in fact, to change their conditions that they were unfazed by Sprint's fierce, and illegal, campaign of threats and intimidation.

Their support for the union seemingly only grew stronger as Sprint's management team stepped up its campaign of illegal coercion. Finally, Sprint did the only thing it could do to crush the first incursion by a union in its long distance operations. It simply shut the doors at La Conexion Familiar on July 14, 1994, eight days before the union representation election.

About two-and-a-half years later, this past December 27th, the National Labor Relations Board ruled that the closing violated federal law and ordered Sprint to rehire the workers with full back pay.

Sprint immediately filed an appeal of the ruling to a U.S. Appeals Court. That will keep the case spinning around the legal system for at least another year and a half, and a Sprint spokesman already has predicted a further appeal to the Supreme Court if the company loses this round.

A remarkable aspect of this case is that Sprint openly, unashamedly, admitted to more than 50 illegal violations of the La Conexion workers' rights at an earlier trial before an administrative law judge.

Knowing that it would receive no more than a wrist slap for its union-busting activities—creating an atmosphere of surveillance of union supporters, having managers interrogate workers one-on-one about the union campaign, openly threatening to shut the office if they voted for the union—Sprint's lawyer brigade brushed off these charges and focused only on the issue of Sprint's motive for the closing. That was the one issue that could provide a real, costly, remedy for the workers.

And sure enough, a slap on the wrist it was for the 50 violations. The administrative law judge's order amounted almost to a sick joke: Sprint was required to write a letter to the workers, after their office was closed for good, stating that it would not in the future violate their rights to organize a union.

Now, finally, a meaningful remedy has been ordered, but Sprint is determined to see that justice is delayed for as long as it takes. Perhaps the company hopes that some of the workers will be dead, and others scattered to the winds no longer to be found, by the time its legal appeals have been exhausted.

Clearly for Sprint, routinely violating labor laws is viewed simply as a smart strategy to enforce its acknowledged objective of remaining ''union free.'' And its associated legal bills are merely a cost of doing business.

This attitude is not unique in the corporate world—in fact, it's becoming the norm today.

A recent study by researchers at Cornell University was inspired by the Sprint/La Conexion Familiar case. It was the first study specifically of the impact of the threat of plant and office closings on worker union drives.

The study found that in fully one-half of all organizing campaigns, as well as in 18 percent of first contract negotiations, employers today threaten to close their facilities. And employers follow through on the threat 12 percent of the time.

This represented an increase in shutdown threats from 30 percent, as found in earlier studies by the same researchers, to 50 percent today.

The result, Cornell reported, is that worker organizing success rates are cut from about 60 percent to 40 percent when the employer threatens to close the facility.

No wonder. What more devastating weapon could an employer use to kill a union drive than to declare—''vote for the union and you lose your job?'' The answer is, shut the office down even before the union election, which is what has made the La Conexion Familiar affair stand out as a case that's being closely watched around the world.

It's somewhat ironic—and certainly must seem so to Sprint—that the La Conexion Familiar workers have emerged as martyrs on the workers' rights battleground.

Sprint clearly thought that a group of mostly immigrant, mostly female workers who spoke only Spanish could be easily intimidated and turned away from their union campaign.

But they weren't intimidated, and I later learned why at a public hearing on the La Conexion affair in 1995 conducted by the Labor Department. One of the workers, a woman from Peru, had testified and was subsequently asked by a news reporter: ''If you knew you could lose your job, why did you keep supporting the union?''

The young woman replied: ''What does risking a job matter? In my country, workers have risked their lives to have a union.''

CONTEST WINNING ESSAY

HON. ROBERT A. WEYGAND

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 12, 1997

Mr. WEYGAND. Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to have Mr. Matthew Arundale, a student from Warwick, RI, who is currently attending Marymount University in Virginia join me in attending President Clinton's State of the Union Address last Tuesday.

Matt was the winner of a contest my office held that asked interested Rhode Islanders attending college in the Washington, DC, area to prepare an essay on why they wanted to attend the State of the Union Address.

While I received many entries, all of fine quality, Matt's was particularly creative. For that reason, I asked him to watch the President's address from the House gallery.

I commend Mr. Arundale's essay to all my colleagues.

I am a sophomore Political Science and Biology double major at Marymount University in Arlington, Virginia. While many students are bitten by the political bug and decide to major in political science, few decide to also pursue a career in medicine. But I have.

While this double-major may seem a bit odd, it really is not. I have always loved politics and the idea that men can work together and effect change for all. But I have also loved the idea of helping people in a more direct way: through medicine. After examining the two pursuits, one can see that they are not all that dissimilar.

Take a politician or government official. They are doctors. Their patient is not one person with one illness. Rather, their patient is a group of people with a variety of illnesses (crime, poverty, education, to name a few).

The politician's x-rays are opinion polls and late-night phone calls from his constituents. His nurses are called legislative aides and political advisors. Legislation are his prescriptions.

Every politician, whether they realize it or not, has been charged with the duties of a doctor. While one may get references from friends before they choose a doctor, the patients of politics look at debates, news conferences, and press releases before they make their choice. A two party system (quickly giving way to third party candidates) ensures that people will always have the opportunity to get a second opinion before trusting themselves to any one doctor. In the end, they hope their choice was correct.

One such political doctor is President Bill Clinton. Last November, he was charged with the duties of continuing his role as ''Chief Doctor of the Nation.'' He has read the public opinion polls, had conferences with his advisors, and listened to peoples' grumps and groans. Now, on this Tuesday, he has to report back to the patient. President Clinton must tell a concerned nation what is wrong and what he plans to do to change it. The patient(s) will be listening, wondering if he heard their complaints correctly. They will also be analyzing the President's suggested treatments. Then, just as the patient with high blood pressure is not sure if he is willing to quit smoking to get healthy, the nation will decide if it is willing to make the sacrifices necessary to fix its problems.

In short, I would love to be present for this report. The President is renowned for his speaking ability, so his bedside manner is unquestionable. But to see the culmination of the political triage process come together would be a momentous experience for a student who hopes to one day become a doctor, too.

Furthermore, as President of my Sophomore Class, I have been asked by FOX TV to participate in an interview on the effect of President Clinton's educational incentive plans on college students. I can think of no better way to garnish first-hand information for this interview than to be in the House of Representatives while Clinton outlines his proposals.

Finally, I know I can never take your wife's place, but, I voted for you!!

THE PATIENT FREEDOM OF CHOICE ACT

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 12, 1997

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce the Patient Freedom of Choice Act of 1997.

Previously, I have sponsored legislation that restricts physicians from self-referral because this practice leads to overutilization and increased health care expenses. This legislation is designed to rectify a similar problem.

Today, nonprofit hospitals, forprofit hospitals, and large health care conglomerates have acquired their own posthospital entities such as home health care agencies, durable medical equipment businesses and skilled nursing facilities so as to refer discharged patients exclusively to their own services. As a result, many nonhospital based entities have seen inflows of new patients completely halted once a hospital acquires an agency in their service area.

The effects of this self-referral trend are harmful. Hospitals that refer patients exclusively to their own entities eliminate competition in the market and thereby remove incentives to improve quality and decrease costs. Further, hospitals are able to selectively refer patients that require more profitable services to their own entity while sending the less profitable cases to the nonhospital based entities. The nonhospital entity is forced to either raise prices or leave the market. Worst of all, patients have no voice in deciding which entity provides the services.

This legislation remedies the problem by leveling the playing field. First, hospitals will be required to provide those patients being discharged for post-hospital services with a list of all participating providers in the service area so that the patient may choose their provider.

Second, hospitals must disclose all financial interest in post hospital service entities to the Secretary of Health and Human Services. In addition, they must report to the Secretary the percentage of post hospital referrals that are