

over offenses that seem ever more obscure or trivial.

Of course, there are genuine scandals, and the behavior of our highest (or lowest) officials must be open to scrutiny. Government and the people who run it can be accountable only if their activities can be inspected. But the process has become twisted into a parody. At last week's press conference, President Clinton was asked 18 questions; 15 concerned campaign fund-raising. Was that the only important matter?

What we're seeing is the attack culture. By attack culture, I mean a mind-set and set of practices that go beyond ordinary partisanship, criticism, debate and investigation. What defines the attack culture is that its animating spirit—unexpressed, but obvious—is to destroy and bring down. Does anyone doubt that the assorted Whitewater investigations aim to destroy President Clinton and the first lady? Does anyone doubt that the charges against House Speaker Gingrich were motivated less by ethical sensitivities than by the desire to annihilate him politically?

Investigation, always a political weapon, is now more so than ever. In a 1990 book ("Politics by Other Means"), political scientists Benjamin Ginsberg and Martin Shefter correctly observed: "American politics has recently undergone a fundamental transformation. . . . [C]ontending forces are increasingly relying on such institutional weapons of political struggle as legislative investigations, media revelations, and judicial proceedings to weaken their political rivals and gain power for themselves."

The attack culture originated with Watergate, and Nixon—destroyed and forced to resign—remains the standard of success. The mimicking of Watergate is increasingly undemocratic and breeds disrespect for the law, politics and (if anyone cares) the press. Most Americans sense that the process is out of control, because no one—no one, that is, who doesn't study these scandals for countless hours—can understand what they're about.

What was Gingrich's great offense? Well, he taught a college course (a sin?). Then, some videotapes of the course were used for political promotion (gee, a politician acting political). But wait: The course was financed by tax-deductible charitable donations, which aren't allowed for politics. Therefore, Gingrich committed a no-no and compounded it by providing false information to Congress (an innocent mistake, he claims; a willful deception, say his foes). Clinton may be guilty of a crime in Whitewater, but three investigations—costing more than \$24 million—have yet to disclose what it is.

I am no fan of Clinton's or Gingrich's; nor am I defending their behavior and certainly wouldn't offer it as a model to my children. But we have elections for voters to decide whether, all things considered, they want to retain their elected leaders. Except in rare cases, that job shouldn't be hijacked by courts, prosecutors or the press with investigations that are increasingly inquisitorial. They aim to prejudice people against their target, even if no serious charges are ultimately sustained. The process is abused, because the investigations are selective (often triggered by the target's prominence) and aim (by adverse publicity) to convict and punish the target.

The attack culture subsists on personal ambition and various political agendas. Reports want a big story; prosecutors seek convictions; partisans crave power. And the mere act of investigation creates pressures for results. Resources have been committed; reputations are at stake. Hardly anyone wants to say: "Sorry, nothing here" or "It's trivial." Every mistake, error or personal ex-

cess is elevated to a great evil. Sinister motives are alleged or implied. If it's not a scandal, why bother?

It's also guilty until proven innocent. Some investigations are self-fulfilling. There are so many laws and regulations that anyone who is investigated exhaustively may be found to have violated something. And some targets, flustered or embarrassed, blunder into criminal coverups. Nor are the targets only prominent officials. The federal Office of Research Integrity recently cleared an experienced scientist of misconduct. But for three years, he was subject to congressional hearings and had his research branded fraudulent. Those years, he said, "have been holy hell. They took away my position, my reputation, my work."

People are smeared because the attack culture is heavy-handed and single-minded. The current furor over campaign financing fits the pattern. It is driven by a coalition of Clinton haters, campaign-finance reformers and the press. The story surely seems compelling: the president (apparently) brokering the Lincoln bedroom for contributions; a host of seedy characters schmoozing at the White House; Al Gore dialing for dollars from his office.

What's missing is perspective. The \$2.96 million returned by the Democratic National Committee constitutes only 1.3 percent of all DNC contributions. Questionable gifts didn't affect the election's outcome, and there's no evidence that donations changed any major policy. Much fund-raising is sleazy. But no one should forget that giving money to a candidate or party is a form of political speech. Donations can't easily be limited without compromising free speech. The present hysteria—nurtured by self-proclaimed reformers—intentionally obscures this point.

All the crusading doesn't reassure the public. Just the opposite. Because most people grasp that the process has been corrupted—being moved by ambition and politics—they put the attackers and the accused increasingly on the same moral plane. A plague on everyone. We become desensitized to genuine scandal because the artificial variety is so common. All democracies need to examine their officials; an enduring dilemma is how to prevent legitimate inquiry from sliding into sanctioned tyranny. When everything's a scandal, we're losing the proper balance.

THE ECONOMY

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 12, 1997

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert my Washington Report for Wednesday, March 5, 1997, into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

THE ECONOMY

One of the nation's leading economists recently said that the economic performance of the United States today is like being at the top of a mountain. He said, "There is an exhilaration form getting there and the view is great, but all paths are downhill." In a fundamental sense, of course, he was right, because the challenge confronting policymakers today is to preserve the expansion and the economic good times we are now enjoying.

STATE OF ECONOMY

The fundamentals in the American economy today look very solid. Experts tell us that the economy is on track with no imbal-

ances, only moderate inflation, an outlook for solid growth at sustainable levels, with nothing obvious on the horizon that would throw the economy off track.

The facts are impressive. The economic expansion has been growing at a solid, non-inflationary pace in recent years, last year growing by 2.5 percent. Much of the recent growth has been fueled by stronger investment and exports. The 70-month expansion that the economy is enjoying has outlasted all but two of the other eight post-war expansions. The unemployment rate stands at 5.4 percent, down from 7.5 percent in 1992. Much of the job growth has been in sectors paying above-average wages. Inflation, which peaked at 6.1 percent in 1990, has remained below 3 percent in recent years. The combination of low unemployment and stable inflation has given the U.S. the lowest "misery index" since the 1960s. The federal budget deficit, which peaked at \$290 billion in 1992, was down to \$107 billion last year. That has helped keep long-term interest rates low.

There is a broad consensus among the experts that the nation's growth, inflation, and unemployment rates this year will be similar to those of 1996, and that unless something unexpected develops, interest rates will fluctuate within relatively narrow ranges. So the U.S. economy is heading into its seventh straight year of expansion.

OTHER COUNTRIES

It is not hard to find good things to say about the American economy, especially when comparing to what's happening in other countries. The United States was again recently judged to be first in international competitiveness, and our global market share of goods continues to increase. Our trade deficit is still too large, but it has declined by almost 50 percent as a percentage of our gross domestic product (GDP).

In addition, the United States continues to lead the world in per capita GDP. We lead the major industrial nations in growth, and have achieved the lowest budget deficit as a percentage of GDP of any of the industrial countries. Job creation in the United States has exceeded all the other major industrial countries combined, and the U.S. unemployment rate has dropped below that of all industrialized countries but Japan.

CONCERNS

But we ought not to spend too much time congratulating ourselves. The U.S. economy still shows some vulnerabilities and there are some areas of concern.

One is wage stagnation and inequality. Although we have seen some improvement recently, median family income has in recent years stagnated and the wage gap between the rich and the poor has widened. Wage inequality in the United States is more pronounced than in all the other industrialized countries. It bothers me that large segments of our population have seen little or no growth in their own incomes.

Even though the federal budget deficit has been reduced sharply in recent years, it is important to remember that the United States is still the world's largest debtor. I am very uneasy with the fact that the world's largest and richest economy, the great superpower, has become such a huge and chronic borrower.

We continue to have shortfalls in savings. We have the lowest personal savings rate among the industrialized countries and it has declined from 4.9% in 1985 to only 4.4% in 1995. The domestic savings simply are not meeting the nation's investment needs. That means we have to rely more on foreign capital and we reduce funds available to invest in future growth.

Although investment has increased in the 1990s, we are still not investing enough. Real

U.S. investment in plant and equipment has declined since 1985. While we continue to lead the world in spending on research and development, our long-term investment as a percentage of our total wealth is falling just as other competitor nations are increasing their programs. While we spend more money than other countries on education, most of the education experts say that our overall performance, especially in the basic science and math skills, is disappointing. And productivity growth in the United States has been less than 1% over the past decade. That is the second lowest rate among the major industrial countries.

PRIORITIES

It is not difficult to identify where our national priorities in economic policy should be. The education and skill levels of the workforce need to be improved. Savings and investment must increase. The budget deficit has to continue to come down to increase savings, and science and technology policy and regulatory reform need urgent attention.

Looking to the future, what worries me the most is the increasing performance of the world's lower-wage economies. They are now competing more effectively in global markets. I worry about our ability to sustain high-wage jobs in that kind of competitive environment. The challenge from these countries is both direct competition in product services but also with firms which might otherwise be located in the United States moving to these countries. I think we have to focus much more urgently on boosting productivity, stepping up the rate of private sector investment, and improving and broadening the skills of the American work force.

CONCLUSION

The U.S. economy has improved in recent years, but more needs to be done. We especially need to bring the budget deficit down further and expand our investment in education, research, and infrastructure. These help build the foundation for the long-term economic health of our country, and should help improve the lives of average working families.

IRISH-AMERICAN PARADE

HON. CHARLES E. SCHUMER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 12, 1997

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. Speaker, I submit the following for the RECORD:

Resolution for the 22d Annual Brooklyn Irish American Parade, Park Slope, New York

Commending the Brooklyn Irish American Parade Committee on its Twenty Second Annual Parade March 16, 1997.

Whereas this parade encourages an appreciation of an ancient Irish heritage; and

Whereas this event is a celebration of Brooklyn's cultural diversity and richness; and

Whereas this parade takes place on the historic site of the Battle of Brooklyn in which Irish Freedom Fighters—Marylanders and other ethnic groups gave their lives to secure independence for our America; and

Whereas the Spirit of '76 was, and still is, the ideal of the Brooklyn Irish American Parade; and

Whereas this year the Parade Committee, its members and officers remember "The Great Famine" (An Gorta Mor) 1845-1850 and Erin's Exiles; and

Whereas "The Great Famine" caused the death of over 1,500,000 in Ireland and tens of

thousands on the coffinships which sailed to America; and

Whereas America is a nation of immigrants and a home to the descendants of the victims and survivors of "The Great Famine" and the Irish Diaspora; and

Whereas it is only fitting that this year's Grand Marshal is Father Colm Joseph Campbell of North Belfast, Chaplain & Co-Ordinator of the Irish Apostolate, Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens and a friend and spiritual counselor to the newest sons and daughters of Erin; now therefore, be it

Resolved, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commend the Brooklyn Irish American Parade Committee on its twenty second Annual Parade to be held on Sunday, March 16, 1997; its Grand Marshal, Father Colm Joseph Campbell, Chaplain & Co-Ordinator of the Irish Apostolate, Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens and his Aides; Eleanor Morrissey, Ladies A.O.H. Kings County; Brian Joseph Coughlan (Irish Culture) Pipe Major, Pipes & Drums of the NYC Police Department Emerald Society; Edward J. Cush (Labor/Business) Iron Workers Union Local #361; Vincent O'Connor (Education) Retired District Supervisor Board of Education; Treasa Goodwin (Gaelic Sports) N.Y. Young Irelands Camogie Club; Cody McCone (Kings County Ancient Order of Hibernians); John McGrath (Grand Council United Emerald Societies/Sanitation Dept.); Parade Chairperson, Kathleen McDonagh; Dance Chairperson, Eileen O'Dea; Journal Chairperson, Martin Cottingham; Raffle Chairperson, Ronnie Killen; Parade Officers, Members and all the citizens of Brooklyn, participating in this important and memorable event; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed be transmitted to Father Colm Joseph Campbell, his Aides and the Brooklyn Irish American Parade Committee in Brooklyn.

HONG KONG REVERSION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. GEORGE P. RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 11, 1997

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, on July 1, 1997, Hong Kong concludes one challenging but prosperous chapter, and inaugurates another of equal potential. While continued prosperity marks Hong Kong's future, a thriving economic, and autonomous course is not guaranteed under the shadow of mainland China's stale political and economic policies. The United States must strive to assist Hong Kong and its people in preserving and pursuing economic and political values so close to our own.

Thus, I support the objectives of H.R. 750, the Hong Kong Reversion Act. This bill reiterates an unyielding support for the autonomy of Hong Kong and future well-being of its people. The act is not insignificant. For the benefit of my colleagues in understanding the importance of this measure, I include for the record April Lynch's analytical account in today's San Francisco Chronicle. The author skillfully catalogs the concerns Californians have respecting Chinese rule over Hong Kong. Let us hope, Mr. Speaker, that our action today is clearly understood in Beijing. The Hong Kong people deserve no less than our unwavering support.

[From the San Francisco Chronicle, Mar. 11, 1997]

BAY AREA'S BIG STAKE IN HONG KONG—ECONOMIC, CULTURAL TIES AT RISK UNDER CHINA RULE

(By April Lynch)

When the flag of the People's Republic of China is raised over Hong Kong this summer, few other places will have more at stake than the Bay Area and California.

A web of multimillion-dollar businesses, strong cultural ties and 150 years of shared history link the Gold State and the City on China's southern coast. Hong Kong and San Francisco, founded about the same time, have long exchanged money, people and plans for the future of the Pacific Rim.

"California and Hong Kong are like neighbors, even with an ocean in the middle," said Richard So, 29, a computer consultant who grew up in Hong Kong, went to school in this country and now commutes to work between Sunnyvale and Hong Kong. "It is hard to imagine one without the other." The Bay Area is a favorite destination for people leaving Hong Kong for the United States—since 1993, 25 percent of them settled in San Francisco, Oakland or San Jose.

With only 6 million people, tiny Hong Kong is California's ninth-largest export market, buying about \$2.6 billion in goods from the state in the first nine months of last year. China, by comparison, has one-fifth of the world's population but ranks 16th on California's list of export buyers. More than 100 California companies—including Bank of America, Walt Disney and Netscape—have offices or their Asia headquarters in Hong Kong.

Now, four months before Britain turns one of the world's most lively capitalist hubs over to the world's biggest communist country on July 1, those ties face an uncertain future.

People with business or family links to Hong Kong hope that China will allow the territory to remain an economic powerhouse, and many Chinese and Chinese Americans take pride that Hong Kong's transition will all but end the Western colonial presence in China. But those feelings are tempered with caution.

"Hong Kong will continue to be of paramount importance," said Jesus Arredondo, spokesman for the California Department of Trade. "It all depends on what the Chinese government does."

COLONY'S ESTABLISHMENT

Since the mid-1800s, California and Hong Kong have never been far apart. Once a few scattered fishing villages, Hong Kong was seized by Great Britain in 1842, after the first Opium War. The colony's establishment encouraged foreign interests that wanted trade and influence in China, but it was a humiliation China has never forgotten.

Britain expanded the colony in 1860 with the Kowloon Peninsula and the New Territories in 1898 and along the way turned Hong Kong into a major international port. San Francisco interests quickly looked to Hong Kong to recruit laborers to work the state's gold mines and the railroads.

Trade, travel and immigration between Hong Kong and California grew—especially after the colony rebuilt from the devastation of World War II and became Asia's financial hub. Hong Kong now has about as many people and covers as much territory as the Bay Area, but it boasts the world's eighth-largest trading economy and stock market, the world's busiest container port and 9 million visitor-arrivals each year.

The mix of Chinese and foreign residents—about 120,000 people in Hong Kong are from other parts of the world, including the United States, England, India, the Philippines