

[Mr. CHRISTENSEN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

EPA OFFERS MORE REGULATIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. SHIMKUS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, the air in this Nation is getting cleaner. Major metropolitan areas are experiencing fewer and fewer days of dirty air, and it is time to thank the EPA for a job well done. In fact, according to the EPA, in almost every major city in America, air pollution levels have been dropping. Nationally since the EPA was established, the combined total of all causes of dirty air have decreased by 29 percent. This reduction occurred even as the Nation's population has grown by 28 percent, people drove more than twice as many miles, and the economy doubled in size.

Our Nation is on the right track to cleaner air. But if you talk to the EPA, you would think the sky was falling. This agency has proposed tightening the standards for ozone and particulate matter even more. This new standard, which may take effect without congressional approval, will not clean the air faster. In fact, it will cost the American economy jobs, erode local tax bases and provide nominal positive health effects. Our Nation does not need new regulations which may force people to car pool to work and increase regulations on our Nation's industries and family farms.

Our Nation needs regulations that are based on sound science, not emotionally driven, feel-good politics. Indeed the scientific community is not unified in its support of these new regulations. While the EPA has a study that claims it can save thousands of lives with these new rules, the National Institute of Environment Health Sciences, another government agency, came to the conclusion that high rates of pollution do not increase rates of asthma. This information directly contradicts the fundamental basis for the new regulation.

In addition, the EPA's own scientific advisory board, which is made up of industry, academic and medical experts, told the EPA that its new standard for particulate matter, quote, "does not provide a scientifically adequate basis for making regulatory decisions for the setting of National Ambient Air Quality Standards and related control of particulate matter in the Clean Air Act," end quote.

We must also ask ourselves why, when the air is getting cleaner in America, the number of people being admitted to hospitals with respiratory complications are increasing? Why is a good thing having a bad effect?

Our Nation needs regulations that do not needlessly destroy jobs. Five of the 19 counties which I represent rely on

coal as a substantial part of their economies. The coal industry has been hit hard by the EPA and stands to be eliminated in southern Illinois if stricter standards are implemented. Unemployment levels in some of my counties would climb even higher than the current 7, 8 to 9 percent that they are now. Not only would these new regulations mean more jobs lost in areas already suffering, but prices on consumer goods will go up as well. Conservative estimates on the direct cost of this regulation on Americans will be around \$10 billion every year in higher costs for cars, farm equipment, electricity, and countless products that Americans rely on every day for their well-being.

□ 1400

Mr. Speaker, as a newly elected Member of Congress, I can say that I am truly amazed and disappointed that the EPA would impose such high costs on the American people without little benefit. Our Nation's air is getting cleaner, the economy is growing, and the unemployment averages on the national level are at an all time low. Controversy surrounds the EPA studies, and all they can do is offer more regulations.

Mr. Speaker, it seems that the EPA is more interested in political agendas and self-preservation than in creating good national policy.

GOVERNMENT IS TOO BIG AND COSTS TOO MUCH

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

Mr. BRADY. Mr. Speaker, working Americans often ask today, "Why can't we make ends meet like our parents did? Why does it take a two-income family to provide even a basic quality of life for our families?"

President Ronald Reagan had a clear answer. Government is too big and costs too much. I would add that today we also have a government that regulates too much. Excessive regulation is a hidden tax on families and on our businesses. Compliance costs are estimated to be \$6,000 for each American household, \$6,000 in costs in regulation for American households.

If you couple taxes, if you add to it regulations, the average American worker is working until July 9 to pay all the costs associated with government. Excessive regulation crushes small business, the engine of our job creation, and today one of the most pervasive fears among America's small businessmen is that they will fail to comply with some obscure government regulation and be forced to shut down.

In 1995, President Clinton convened a conference on small business, asked them to meet in our capital. More than 1,600 attended. The No. 1 concern that they registered, they were overregulated and had too much government paperwork to comply with.

According to our Small Business Administration, the cost of regulation, of paperwork and of tax law compliance is about \$5,000 per worker. It is even greater for smaller firms. Regulation puts a brake on our small business job creation, it puts a brake on the entrepreneurial spirit which is the promise of America.

An example of unnecessary regulation, as Congressman SHIMKUS just described, are the new proposed EPA air quality regulations that Carol Browner recently announced. They deal with ozone and particulate matter, and if adopted, these stricter standards mean that many communities that meet existing standards will be redesignated as nonattainment areas. Other communities who spent millions to control these types of pollution will be told they must now do it another way. It has no scientific basis, it has questionable benefits. The regulations though will have a dramatic impact on our families in Texas, where I live, and across America.

This new regulatory burden is an unproven, untested science experiment based on the premise that if an apple a day is good for you, then a bushel a day must be better.

Regulations have good intent, everyone supports clean air and clean water. Everything looks good on paper, but it is how it works in real life that affects you and I. The answer is to move the Federal Government closer to the customers they have served to initiate a cost-benefit analysis so we know what this costs, ensure that regulatory actions are based on sound science that we agree upon, that we have a budget within regulation that puts a ceiling on the cost of regulation to the American economy, and we have to initiate sunset review. That means put an expiration date on every regulation, on every program, on every agency, commission, and council, where they go out of existence unless they can prove their value and their worth to us today.

The bottom line is that American families and American businesses need a break from our Federal Government. We should restore common sense to our Government and remove the barriers to free enterprise and job creation. We have that opportunity in this session, and we need to take advantage of it.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. GOSS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. GOSS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

IMPORTED PRODUCE LABELING ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. BONO] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BONO. Mr. Speaker, I sometimes get upset to a point to where I feel that I have to at least speak out, especially when I cannot do anything about it.

The situation with Mexico and NAFTA and California is basically a disaster for California, and it is abusive. It is extremely abusive, and I was raised not to take abuse, and if somebody dished out abuse, I would always give it back, and that worked out well.

So now being here in Congress and seeing abuses inflicted on us by a country who has total disregard for our lifestyle and what we require and what we do, it rather infuriates me. But we have a treaty, a NAFTA treaty, and the way we must go about that legally to handle that is one story which I am very active on, but I consider it one of many abuses we get from Mexico.

However, today I rise for one specific, to speak on behalf of my bill to protect American consumers and produce farmers, H.R. 1232, the Imported Produce bill. This does not necessarily totally relate to Mexico, by the way, the Labeling Act of 1997. Consumers need to know the country of origin labeling. Almost every product is clearly labeled "made in China" or "made in Mexico" except the produce we eat. Every other type of food is labeled. Why not the produce?

Consumers want to know where the produce they eat is grown. Does the country of origin allow pesticides banned in the United States? Are they working under the conditions that are sanitary? Recent news stories of children being infected with hepatitis due to Mexican strawberries are a prime example of the risk imported produce can pose. Before that it was bacteria in raspberries from Guatemala. What is next?

But this is why this is not only a health issue. It is an economic issue. Since NAFTA, the total economic loss in the production of fresh winter vegetables has been nearly \$700 million. 200 farms have closed due to huge numbers of tomatoes imported from Mexico.

Without labeling, how can the consumer choose American produce over Japanese produce; how can they choose American produce over imported produce?

Anyway, I hate to read these things.

Anyway, my point is that our agriculture industry cannot compete now with Mexico because Mexico is not required to live up to the regulations that we must live up to. So therefore their product can come into our country, appear to be our product, undersell our product and cannot only be dangerous but also put industry out of business. This is another abuse that we must correct.

Most importantly, it seemed like last year I was hearing about school lunches from children that was considered the biggest travesty in the world, but now we are actually killing children with hepatitis from produce and that is sort of breezing by. I have a bill that calls for the labeling of produce. I

ask that all of my colleagues support my bill when it comes to the floor.

OUR SOARING TRADE DEFICIT CANNOT BE IGNORED

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

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, the business cycle has not yet been repealed, but if we did the right thing in the Congress, I believe we could do a lot to alleviate the great harm done by the business cycle.

Mr. Speaker, artificially low interest rates are the culprit in the Government created boom bust cycle. Federal regulated low rates cause bad business decisions, confuse consumers and encourage debt. These distortions prompt market corrections which bring on our slumps.

In recent years the artificially low interest rates that banks pay on savings have served to reduce savings. In the 1970's savings were low because it was perceived that the money was rapidly losing its purchasing power. It was better to spend than to save. As money leaves savings accounts it frequently goes into stocks and bonds adding fuel to the financial bubble which has been developing now for over 15 years. Domestic and foreign central bank purchases of our treasury debt further serves to distort and drive interest rates below the market level.

Our soaring trade deficit is something that cannot be ignored. In January there was a negative trade deficit in goods of more than \$19 billion, the highest in our history. Our deficit has now been running over \$100 billion for several years, and the artificially strong dollar has encouraged this imbalance. Temporarily a negative trade balance is a benefit to American consumers by holding down price inflation here at home and allowing foreigners to finance our extravagance. These trends will end once confidence is shattered and the dollar starts to lose value on the international exchange markets.

The tragedy is that there are very few in Congress interested in this issue. Even on the Committee on Banking and Financial Services I hear very little concern expressed about the long term weakness of the dollar, yet economic law dictates that persistent negative trade imbalances eventually have to be corrected; it is only a matter of time.

I suspect in the next several years Congress will be truly challenged. The high level of frustration in this body comes from the fact that the large majority are not yet willing to give up the principles upon which the welfare state exists. Eventually an economic crisis will force all Americans, including Congress, to face up to the serious problems that we have generated for ourselves over the past 50 years.

I expect deficits to explode and not come down. I suspect the economy is

much weaker than is currently claimed. In the not too distant future we will be in a serious recession. Under these circumstances the demand for spending will override all other concerns. In spite of current dollar euphoria, dollar weakness will become the economic event of the late 1990's. Consumers and entitlement recipients will face the problem of stagflation, probably worse than we saw in the 1970's. I expect very few in Congress to see the monetary side of this problem.

The welfare state will be threatened, and yet the consensus will remain that what is needed is more revenues to help alleviate the suffering, more Federal Reserve monetary stimulus to the economy, more price controls, which we already have in medicine, higher taxes and protectionism.

Soon it will be realized that NAFTA and GATT were not free trade treaties, but only an international effort at trade management for the benefit of special interests. Ask any home builder how protectionist sentiment adds several thousands of dollars to the cost of a home by keeping out cheaper Canadian lumber in spite of NAFTA's pretense at free trade.

The solution to this mess is not complex. It is however politically difficult to overcome the status quo and the conventional wisdom of our intellectual leaders and the media. What we need is a limited government designed for the protection of liberty. We need minimal control over our Nation's wealth, not the more than 50-percent of government control that we currently have. Regulatory control in minutia, as we have today, must end. Voluntary contracts need to be honored once again. None of this will work unless we have a currency that cannot be debased and a tax system that does not tax income, savings, capital gains estates or success.

Although it will be difficult to go from one form of government to another, there will be much less suffering if we go rapidly in the direction of more freedom rather than a protracted effort to save the welfare state. Perestroika and glasnost did not save communism. Block grants, a line item veto and a balanced budget amendment will not save the welfare state.

THE ISSUE OF CAPITAL GAINS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. DREIER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to expand on a couple of remarks made by my friend from Houston, Dr. PAUL, and to talk about an issue which I actually have raised twice here on the floor today, once during the 1-minute, and then I discussed it during the time that I was managing the noncontroversial rule that we had for consideration of the suspensions, and that is the issue of capital gains.