

HEATED DEBATE CONTINUES ON
NAFTA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. BROWN] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, as the President prepares to ask Congress for fast track negotiating authority, heated debate continues on the economic effects of the North American Free Trade Agreement. There is no debate, however, on the serious threat that NAFTA poses to food safety in the United States.

In an effort to increase trade with Mexico, NAFTA limits border inspections of food, it allows Mexican trucks to enter the United States with limited inspection. As a result, NAFTA is directly responsible for a significant increase in imports of contaminated foods into the United States.

These lax inspection procedures contributed to a sharp increase in food imports from Mexico. Imports of Mexican fruit have increased 45 percent, and vegetable imports have increased 31 percent. More than 70 percent of these imports are carried into the United States by truck.

As the General Accounting Office recently documented, these trucks, many of which have been identified as dangerous themselves, pass through the border uninspected, bringing increasing amounts of food tainted with diseases and unhealthy pesticides. In fact, the GAO found that over 99 percent of Mexican trucks coming into the United States were never inspected, and of those that were inspected, almost half of them were found to be unsafe.

We were alarmed earlier this year when 179 Michigan schoolchildren contracted hepatitis after eating tainted Mexican strawberries. In order to prevent similar incidents in the future, the United States should, first, renegotiate the provisions in NAFTA which relate to border inspections and food safety and ensure that any future requests for fast track authority include strong food safety protections; second, increase the funding for border inspections or, alternatively, limit the increasing rate of food imports to ensure the safety of our food supply in this country so what happened in Michigan does not happen in other States across the country; and third, begin an aggressive program to label all food-stuffs, including fresh and frozen fruits, vegetables, and meats with their country of origin.

We must work with the President to address these serious deficiencies in our trade policy and to ensure that these same mistakes are not made in the future. Let us get off the fast track for unsafe foods. The health of our families is too important to go fast. Let us slow down on negotiating fast track. Let us slow down and craft trade agreements that contain meaningful food safety protections.

Again, remember these numbers: More than 99 percent of trucks that

come into the United States from Mexico have never been inspected. Of those that are inspected, almost half of them have been found to be unsafe, and only about 1 percent of food that is coming into the United States, fruits and vegetables, frozen and fresh, are inspected. That is what is so important as we debate fast track authority in September for the coming year. It is important that we include those food safety elements in the fast track agreement.

BIPARTISAN AGREEMENT ON TAX
RELIEF FOR AMERICANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Iowa [Mr. GANSKE] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. GANSKE. Madam Speaker, Congressmen and women from both sides of the aisle are just getting the details on the balance-the-budget plan and the tax cut plan that has been agreed to by the congressional leadership and the administration. The details look good, and I am happy to see this morning that we are getting bipartisan support for this tax cut bill and for this spending bill.

There will be a lot of important things in this bill for the average citizen in this country. One of the details I heard about last night was that we will move up the deductibility of our health insurance for the self-employed to 100 percent. I do not have the details to tell over what period of time, whether that will be immediate or not, but I know that this is part of the budget.

As a physician, I have been very much concerned about making health care more affordable for the average citizen, and by making 100 percent of one's premium deductible will help people afford health insurance. This will put an awful lot of people back on to health insurance that are not on it now.

One of the other issues that is in the tax bill that affects people in my district, where I have a large farming community, is that they will be able to income-average over 3 years. People who farm know that some years they have good years and some years they have bad years, but over a period of time is how one sets aside funds for one's retirement, one's pension. By being able to income-average over 3 years, one will be able to smooth out those bumps and those lows, and I think it will be a good thing for farm communities and farmers.

When we look at children's health, we are adding a lot more dollars into that to enable people to pick up health insurance for their children. There will be a number of ways for flexibility for people and States to implement that additional funding.

People say, well, look, why did we not come to this agreement earlier? Part of the reason is that a decision had to be made on where to find the funding. Part of that additional fund-

ing comes from an increased tax on tobacco. I favor that. As a physician, I have treated people who smoke who have had lung cancer and throat cancer, mouth cancer. It also increases heart disease. Tobacco is not good for our health; everyone recognizes that. An increase of 10 cents per pack will get some additional moneys back into the health system, and to help people afford health insurance I think is the right way to go.

When we look back over the last 4 years, we have had some immense battles here on the floor, but today and last night, as the administration, as Congress have come together on a bipartisan agreement, I think we are getting past that, we are getting on with the Nation's business. We are going to help save Medicare, we are going to provide tax cuts for working families, we are going to save Medicare for our senior citizens, and I think we are going to balance the budget.

Let us keep our fingers crossed that the economy goes well over the next 5 or 6 years. But by moving toward a balanced budget, we are going to help ensure that the economy does well, and by freeing up capital with capital gains, we are going to increase jobs and help the economy grow.

Madam Speaker, I think that we have made a lot of progress. I think we will see the rhetoric lowered on this floor, and I think the vast majority of people from the House and the Senate are going to support this piece of legislation, and I am very happy to be a Member of Congress today.

NAFTA HAS FAILED THE
ENVIRONMENTAL TEST

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from California [Mr. FILNER] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to join my colleagues in a discussion of NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, because it is of significant importance, not only to our country, but to my district in particular.

NAFTA's rationales of the global economy, world trade and environment, are really local issues for those of us, as I do, that live along the United States-Mexico border. I represent part of the city of San Diego; I represent a good part of the California-Mexican border; and I will tell my colleagues that from our observation on the scene, NAFTA has failed the environmental test. NAFTA has failed the environmental test.

The region that I represent includes Tijuana, the fastest growing city in Mexico, thanks to NAFTA and the Maquiladora program. In Tijuana, over 100,000 people work at approximately 1,000 of these plants that we call maquiladoras. Most of them are United States-owned. These factories range

from low-tech to very-high-tech. They produce televisions and VCR's, electric components and metals, automotive parts, textiles, and furniture. The four largest manufacturing sectors exist in Tijuana, and these are also the largest users of toxic chemicals.

Having such a large number of industries in a relatively small area poses a real threat to residents not only in Mexico but on the United States side of the border as well. NAFTA supporters promised that industrial growth would occur throughout Mexico, but in fact the majority of growth continues to be concentrated along our border.

In 1993, before NAFTA was passed, I had the opportunity to tour Tijuana, along with several of my congressional colleagues. We visited abandoned lead smelters, new industrial parks, and nearby residential areas. We witnessed the very poor environmental health conditions that existed at that time. Many of us, including myself, fought hard to ensure that NAFTA included detailed strategies to improve the environmental and labor conditions faced by people who lived along the border region.

However, despite the side agreements and the mechanisms which were promised to solve these issues, the situation has simply not improved. Industry continues to grow in areas with little or no infrastructure to support the environmental health and safety needs of the working people and the residents in these areas.

Just a few weeks ago, Madam Speaker, there was a tremendous hazardous waste fire in Tijuana, an unfortunate example of the many environmental hazards which NAFTA did not address. That fire, at a United States-owned plant called Pacific Treatment, which is a transfer station for hazardous industrial waste, ignited a mixture of chemical substances. Firebombs exploded over the neighboring residential areas and factories adjacent to what we call the Otay Mesa Industrial Park. Not only did the Pacific Treatment facility lack the necessary emergency systems, such as sprinklers, but the entire industrial park, filled with manufacturing and chemical storage plants, contained not one fire hydrant.

This industrial park is located only a few miles south of the United States-Mexico border. Over 200 tons of hazardous waste burned in the blaze, including organic solvent such as toluene, acetone, paint dust, and xylene, just to name a few. The blaze released a dark cloud of toxic fumes that blew directly in the residential neighborhood less than 300 yards away.

Nearby residents complained of strong odors during the fire, and in the days that followed, they reported headaches, vomiting, eye and skin irritation. We all know that exposure to the chemicals released can lead to long-term health repercussions ranging from reproductive problems to damage of internal organs and the nervous system.

The Tijuana Emergency Response Team was also put at risk by their dire shortage of equipment and inadequate preparation. They arrived on the scene with only 44 breathing apparatuses for 200 fire fighters. As a result, 50 fire-fighters suffered from smoke inhalation and 5 were hospitalized.

No one should be surprised by this calamity. We are only lucky it was not worse. There are many changes that we need to make to protect both the United States and Mexican sides of the border. NAFTA must be revisited to address these environmental issues. NAFTA should not be expanded without first making sure that adequate infrastructure is in place to handle the resulting industrial growth. NAFTA's environmental side agreements should be brought back to the table and amended to include such items as, No. 1, that the United States and Mexico must create a truly effective system to track hazardous materials and waste from beginning to end, providing freedom of access to both countries' data.

Madam Speaker, I include for the RECORD my remaining recommendations and look forward to a further discussion of the issues of NAFTA. NAFTA has failed the environmental test.

The United States and Mexico must create a truly effective system to track hazardous materials and waste from beginning to end, providing freedom of access to both countries' data so that industry is more accountable and people are aware of the hazardous materials in their neighborhoods; the current HAZTRAKS system fails to meet these requirements.

We must also create a binational emergency response system so when disasters such as the Pacific Treatment fire occur, the impact of dangerous chemicals can be mitigated.

The binational efforts currently in place, such as the Border XXI Program, have had no real impact on the border region. Let's not continue to just study the problems, but instead let's take action. The money currently spent on Border XXI studies and conferences should be spent on cleaning up known contaminated sites and preventing new disasters.

Mr. Speaker, the environmental, health and safety problems that existed before NAFTA have not gone away. In fact, many of the conditions we witnessed three years ago have worsened. More people are at risk, more people are suffering the effects of industrialization without an adequate infrastructure. That is why we must not expand NAFTA. We must solve the very real health and safety problems that exist along the United States-Mexico border before we consider expansion of this trade policy.

NAFTA IS COSTING AMERICA TOO MUCH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997 the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. KUCINICH] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, the news from the latest assessment of

NAFTA's effects is bad. They reported bad news for northern Ohio, where I represent the west side of the city of Cleveland and the surrounding suburbs. The story there is repeated around the country's auto-dependent regions.

The latest report reveals that United States exports to Mexico are inconsequential. Mexico is not the consumer market the NAFTA cheerleaders promised that it would be. Mexico has been increasingly an export platform for vehicles sold in the United States. United States auto imports from Mexico are more than 10 times the value of United States exports to Mexico. The United States auto trade deficit has grown since NAFTA by about 400 percent, \$14.6 billion from \$3.6 billion.

The report is silent about jobs lost to Mexico. The report's authors claim that they can only estimate the number of jobs gained in the United States through exports but they cannot estimate the number of jobs lost due to increased imports. Well, that defies common sense. The Department of Labor's own figures of jobs lost due to NAFTA estimate over 120,000 jobs lost. Respectable academic estimates of jobs lost due to NAFTA put the number of jobs lost at about 420,000. The report can estimate only 90,000 to 160,000 jobs supported by NAFTA-associated exports to Mexico.

What the assessment did not say is how NAFTA has affected the American worker and the American way of life. The bad news is that NAFTA has cost the American people jobs, it has cost American families their stability, NAFTA has cost American people their homes, NAFTA has cost people health care benefits, and NAFTA has cost American parents an ability to help provide a college education for their children.

The report does not address the fact that NAFTA has made a big impact on the American workplace. NAFTA has strengthened employers' hands to take back wages and to crush collective bargaining in the United States. According to a Cornell University researcher, manufacturing and transportation firms have threatened to close the plant 62 percent of the time workers are either trying to form a union or trying to negotiate a new contract once they have a union.

Let me give a case in point. NTN Brower in Macomb, IL, used threats to scare workers. The company circulated a leaflet with the headline: "With the UAW, your jobs may go south for more than the winter." Now, against a map of the United States, a large arrow pointed south to Mexico, and it reads: "There are Mexicans willing to do your jobs for \$3 to \$4 an hour. Free trade treaty allows" this. This is right from the literature that was passed out in the plant.

Let me give another case in point: ITT Automotive in Michigan, where the company parked 13 flatbed trailers loaded with shrink-wrapped production equipment in front of the plant for the