

the NAFTA-like trade agreements to South America, Chile, and the Caribbean Basin.

Mr. Speaker, what the fast track authority really does is extend trade agreements to countries without any chance of the U.S. Congress or the U.S. Senate to amend, alter, or change these agreements. We are very concerned about this fast track authority. We do not know what the rush is and why we have to enter into another fast track type of agreement when we find problems with past fast track legislation, namely, the NAFTA agreement.

In the past, Mr. Speaker, when we may have criticized fast track agreements, and it centered on labor or environmental concerns, and these are good reasons to oppose fast track if they do not address our environmental or labor concerns, but there is a third reason and maybe a more pressing reason to reject this new fast track authority for the President if the fast track legislation does not contain food safety and pesticide use and control of fruits, vegetables, meats, poultry coming into this country.

Food safety should be of the utmost concern of all Americans. It is not a trade issue, it is a safety issue, based upon the food we present to our family each and every day.

If we take a look at the NAFTA experience, Mr. Speaker, we find that over the past 3 years that NAFTA has been implemented, we find that the standards for food safety, pesticide use on food and products coming into the United States has actually been lowered under NAFTA. Why should our standards, our high qualities that we enjoy here in the United States to ensure proper food, nutrition, and safety on our dinner tables, be waived or lowered in the name of some fast track agreement?

If we take a look at the May 1997 General Accounting Office review of the NAFTA and the food safety issue, we find that over 9,000 trucks per day come into this country from Mexico. That is 3.3 million trucks a year. When we take a look at it, there is very little or no enforcement or inspection of these vehicles entering the United States.

For instance, the GAO study reports that strawberries alone has an 18-percent violation of our health food and safety standards. Carrots have a 12-percent violation. Head lettuce that comes into the United States from Mexico, 15 percent of them are found to be in violation of our food and health standards. Now, these are not my statistics, or it is not my report, but that of the Government Accounting Office, May 1997 study.

When we eat contaminated food, we have problems, as we have seen recently in this country, with E. coli, or hepatitis A. Hepatitis A along the Mexican border with Texas has a 2 to 5 times greater hepatitis outbreak in certain counties in Texas than the national average, and it is directly relat-

ed to food entering into the United States not properly cared for, inspected, and treated before it is being placed on our tables. Even in Michigan where I am from, Mr. Speaker, this past year we had 130 schoolchildren who were infected with hepatitis A when they consumed strawberries that were grown in Mexico.

When we talk about pesticides, which ones can and cannot be used to grow fruits and vegetables, many of those standards are waived under the current NAFTA agreement, and I am afraid that under the new fast track authority for the South American and Caribbean Basin that there will not be adequate pesticide standards placed in that agreement.

Again, this is not a trade issue, but really a safety issue. We should not lower our standards. We should not jeopardize the health and safety of our families in the name of trade, but let us not lower our standards.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. BROWN] and myself have been preparing a letter to send to the President which asks him, before he agrees to any fast track authority, we would ask him and we would urge him to do the following: Renegotiate the provisions of NAFTA which relate to border inspections and food safety, and ensure that any future requests for fast track authority include strong food safety protections. Increase the funding for border inspections, or in the alternative, limit the increasing rate of food imports to ensure that safety of our food is paramount at the time of inspection. We would also ask the President to begin an aggressive program to label all food, including fresh and frozen fruits, vegetables, and meats, and also place what country they are from.

What we find now is food coming into the United States, and they are in a big truck or container ship.

FAST TRACK DEBATE

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. Mr. Speaker, I got confirmation yesterday from the Embassy of Chile that former Presidential candidate Bob Dole is going to represent the Government of Chile against the United States in a trade dispute over salmon. The Embassy expressed the hope and expectation that former Senator Dole would advise the Chilean Government on its political strategy on the fast track debate currently underway in the United States Congress.

I would urge Senator Dole to reconsider his decision. Unfortunately, this is business as usual, and it underscores how bad trade agreements make their way through Congress. Foreign governments have tremendous resources to hire American lobbyists and Washing-

ton DC law firms with powerful connections. Often these lobbyists are prominent ex-Members of Congress, former Senators, and ex-trade officials. But Bob Dole is different. He is not just another politician. I am not saying that Senator Dole has done anything wrong. He left the Senate in June 1996, so he is not bound by the 1-year revolving door laws.

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He is free to represent Chile if he wants. But I am saying that this is too much business as usual. Senator Dole is playing on the visitor's team, and we want him back on the home team. We want him on America's team, not Chile's team. Chile has threatened to take the United States to the World Trade Organization if we act to protect our American salmon farmers and salmon fishermen.

What do the American people think when they see Bob Dole working as a lobbyist for a foreign government which is suing the U.S. Government? I believe there are many American working families, particularly in New England, especially in Maine and in the State of Washington and in the Pacific Northwest and in the State of Alaska, who will be astounded to learn that the same Bob Dole who asked for their support in a Presidential election just 10½ months ago is now trying to beat them and take their jobs in the international arena.

Clearly, this sends the wrong signal to the American people. Clearly, that is why I am asking Senator Dole to reconsider his decision.

We are going to have a tough and vigorous debate over fast track legislation in the House of Representatives. There are many of us, especially on the Democratic side, who are adamantly opposed to fast track without labor and environmental provisions and safeguards. We know we have a tough fight on our hands. We want to keep focused on the issues: jobs in America, environmental protection, food safety, worker and labor provisions, truck safety. We are going to take our case to the American people.

Senator Dole has signed on to help Chile with its political strategy for fast track in the U.S. Congress. This is a perfect example of how things like fast track get approved, even when the American people are so adamantly against them.

USDA ACCOUNTABILITY AND EQUITY ACT OF 1997

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentlewoman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, the National Black Farmers Association marched yesterday in front of the White House. They marched for equality, they marched for change, they

marched for fairness, and they marched for justice.

Why do they march, we may ask? They march because the USDA has a documented history of discrimination against blacks and other minority farmers. Over the last 32 years there have been numerous reports declaring and describing the problems of deliberate discrimination by the USDA against black farmers, by agencies such as the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, the inspector general, and our very own Committee on Government Operations, as it was known then.

Farmers and ranchers are invaluable resources to all of us. American producers, who represent less than 3 percent of the total population, provide more than enough food and fiber to meet the needs of our Nation, as well as many nations overseas. By now it should be clear that it is not in our national interest to accept the elimination of small farmers, family farmers, nor minority farmers and the limited resource farmers in the name of progress.

From 1910 to 1993 the number of American farms have declined from a little more than 6.4 million to less than 2.1 million, roughly a 70-percent decline and decrease. This decline is even greater in the year 1997. The decline in minority farmers is even sharper.

In my home State of North Carolina, there has been a 64-percent decline in minority farmers just over the last 15 years, from 6,996 farms in 1978 to 2,498 farms in 1992. There are several reasons why the number of minority and limited-resource farmers are declining so rapidly, but the one that has been documented time and time again is the discriminatory environment present in the Department of Agriculture, the very agency established by the U.S. Government to accommodate and assist special needs of all farmers and all ranchers.

The General Accounting Office found instances of discrimination in fiscal years 1995 and 1996. GAO also found the disapproval rates of loans were 6 percent higher for minority farmers than the 10 percent rate for the nonminority farmers. The very next month two related reports were released: the Office of Inspector General's Evaluation Report for the Secretary on civil rights issues and the Civil Rights Action Team Report.

The authors of these hard-hitting reports came to the identical conclusion that those who had looked at this issue some 32 years before did. There are significant problems of discrimination within the Department of Agriculture. The very same conclusion, 32 years later.

The farmers and ranchers of America, including minority and limited-resource producers, through their labor and sustained effort, sustain each and every one of us and maintain the lifeblood of our Nation through providing food to us. Without these hard-working men and women, how could we be fed and clothed, regardless of their race?

These people do not discriminate with their product. That is why, Mr. Speaker, each of us should commit ourselves that we should not have the extra burden of discrimination or racism rearing its ugly head. Secretary Glickman has said he is personally committed to returning USDA to its original status as a people's department, to serve all the people, all the people, without regard to their racial identification.

I am equally committed in that effort to achieve that goal. I introduced H.R. 2185, the USDA Accountability and Equity Act of 1997, in conjunction with the gentleman from Georgia, Mr. SANFORD BISHOP, the gentleman from Alabama, Mr. EARL HILLIARD, and the gentleman from Mississippi, Mr. BENNY THOMPSON.

Mr. Speaker, we all should have the goal that discrimination has no basis for the farmers and producers for all of America. Please, Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to join with me in that goal.

WE MUST REMEMBER OUR POW'S AND MIA'S

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentlewoman from California [Ms. SANCHEZ] is recognized during morning hour debates for 2 minutes.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, last Friday I joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars from my district in recognizing and remembering Prisoner-of-War, Missing-in-Action day. POW-MIA day offers us an opportunity not only to remember and recognize those that we have lost, but also to rededicate ourselves to the cause of finding these men or their remains and bringing them home to their family and to their grateful Nation. We must work together to ensure the fullest possible accounting of these men, for their families and for all Americans who have benefitted from their fight for liberty and freedom.

There are still over 164 POW's and MIA's from California from the Vietnam war unaccounted for. This means that these 164 men will not walk home tonight to their wives and children, 164 men who will not be able to enjoy the freedom for which they gave the last full measure of devotion.

I urge my colleagues to join me in recognizing and in remembering these men. We must continue to fight and remember those we have lost in battle for freedom. Until all of these men from throughout this country have been accounted for, we must not rest in our efforts.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 8 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

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AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore [Mr. PEASE] at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Rev. James David Ford, D.D., offered the following prayer:

As we offer our thanks and praise to You, O gracious God, we listen to Your word of faith, Your message of hope, and Your gift of love. Enable us as best we can to hear Your word even with the clamor of the world about us compelling our attention and demanding our allegiance. Help us to distinguish Your message of justice and mercy and humility from the cries of any false prophet who prescribes words of selfishness or arrogance. We are grateful for Your favor to us, O God, by which You bless us and our Nation, and we pray for Your benediction upon us, now and evermore. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. CHABOT] come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. CHABOT led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

EDUCATION AT THE HEART OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

(Mr. BALLENGER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, if any issue goes to the heart of the concept that every child should have a shot at the American dream, education is it. Without a good education, many dreams will lie forever beyond the reach of those who wish to get ahead in life.

But there are many difficult obstacles standing in the way of a good education, especially for those born to disadvantage and hardship. Of course, it is easy for the liberal elite, safely ensconced in their suburban homes and enclaves, to send their own children to exclusive private school. But the disadvantaged, the very same people they pretend to champion, do not have that luxury.

That is why it is particularly distressing to see that the liberal elite is