

In many parts of this country, my congressional district included, no criminal court can be held without the availability of an interpreter. Drive-by shootings by gangs made up of illegal immigrants has become commonplace.

What is the Federal Government doing about this problem? Since 1995, the budget for the INS has been substantially increased so that it is almost \$4 billion for the current fiscal year. Congress has mandated that the INS add at least 1,000 new border agents every year until the year 2001, but has this been done? Is the INS using its \$4 billion to enforce the letter and spirit of the 1996 Immigration Reform Act? The answer is a resounding no.

In his latest budget, President Clinton has decided to cut off funding to hire the new 1,000 agents. It seems that the Clinton administration has decided not only to undermine Congress' get-tough immigration laws, but to completely ignore them altogether.

□ 2100

The Border Patrol is only the most obvious component of a system of law enforcement that should cover both the border and interior enforcement. Even though it continues to receive most of the attention, about 40 percent of all illegal aliens in this country came here legally and simply overstayed their visas. Therefore, interior enforcement is an integral part of protecting the integrity of our borders.

Yet the INS field offices were recently told that their interior enforcement budgets would be cut by as much as 90 percent from last year's level. The INS's eastern region, covering States east of the Mississippi River, was told that its enforcement budget for fiscal year 1999 has been cut from more than \$10 million down to \$1 million.

The INS has begun a policy of releasing illegal aliens that they feel they cannot afford to detain. The INS plans to release at least 2,000 illegal immigrants, including people who have been convicted of arson, armed robbery, manslaughter, drug trafficking, alien smuggling and firearms violations. A spokesman for the INS acknowledges that detainees who get released probably will not ever be deported, since 9 out of 10 are never found again.

Agents in field offices are being told, "If you need money to do a case," then simply "do not send it up." A senior investigating official said that without more detention space, there is little point in arresting people because "they get home before you do."

The administration's refusal to allocate the appropriate funding for interior enforcement is not even the biggest hindrance to the enforcement of our laws. In what is called a major shift in strategy, the INS has decided to discontinue such practices as traditional workplace raids and instead emphasize only operations against foreign criminals, alien smugglers, and document fraud.

What should be done about this situation? Mr. Speaker, I call on you and my other colleagues to let officials at the INS and in the administration know that ignoring or undermining our Nation's laws will not be tolerated. I call on each of us to throw a spotlight on the INS's operations, to call them to task on laws that are being flouted and policies that have seemingly been forgotten.

I would ask us all, if we wish to maintain our Nation of immigrants, of letting those who wait in line and bide their time and abide by the laws that we have in place so that they can come legally in this country, then we must not ignore the fact that our immigration lawyers are being ignored and the policies are not being enforced.

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

(Mr. GREEN of Texas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous to take the time previously allotted to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN).

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, March is Women's History Month, and I come to the floor of the House this evening to salute the mothers of Women's History Month, the National Women's History Project, known as "The Project." The Project is from the 6th Congressional District in California, the district that I am proud to represent.

About a year ago I traveled to Seneca Falls, New York to celebrate with my colleagues and our Nation's women the 150th anniversary of the women's rights movement. This was truly a special occasion because Sonoma County, which is my home district, is the birthplace of the National Women's History Project, the organization responsible for the establishment of women's history month and a leader in the 150th anniversary of the women's rights celebration.

The Project, the Women's History Project, is a nonprofit educational organization founded in 1980, committed to providing education and resources to recognize and celebrate women's diverse lives and historic contributions to society. Today they are repeatedly

cited by educators, publishers, and journalists as the national resource for information on U.S. women's history.

Thanks to the Project's effort, every March boys and girls across the country recognize and learn about women's struggles and contributions in science, literature, business, politics, and every other field of endeavor.

As recently as 1970, women's history was virtually unknown, left out of school books, left out of classroom curriculum. In 1978, I was the chairwoman of the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women. At that time, I was astounded by the lack of focus on women.

Under the leadership of Mary Ruthsdotter and through the hard work of these women, the celebration of International Women's Day was expanded and declared by Congress to be National Women's History Week. Together, the women of my district and the Project succeeded in nationalizing awareness of women's history.

As word of the celebration's success spread across the country, State Departments of Education honored Women's History Week; and, within a few years, thousands of schools and communities nationwide were celebrating National Women's History Week every March.

In 1987, The Project petitioned Congress to expand the national celebration to the entire month of March. Due to their efforts, Congress issued a resolution declaring the month of March to be Women's History Month. Each year since then, nationwide programs and activities on women's history in schools, workplaces, and communities have been developed and shared.

In honor of Women's History Month, I want to praise Mary Ruthsdotter, Molly MacGregor, and Bonnie Eisenberg, who are the birth mothers for this very notion, which makes me, by the way, the midwife. I want to acknowledge Lisl Christy, Cindy Burnham, Jennifer Josephine Moser, Suanne Otteman, Donna Kuhn, Sunny Bristol, Denise Dawe, Kathryn Rankin, and Sheree Fisk Williams. These are the women now working at the Project. All of these women serve as leaders in the effort to educate Americans of all ages. They educate them about the contributions of women in our society.

Under strong and thoughtful leadership by Molly MacGregor, the National Women's History Project educated America about the 150th anniversary of the women's rights movement.

The Project was repeatedly called upon by the National Park Service, in particular the Women's Rights National Historical Park, to help them integrate women's history into their exhibits. Their "Living the Legacy of Women's Rights" theme also made it possible for thousands of communities, local schools, employers, and businesses to support and celebrate the 150th anniversary. The Project also launched a media campaign which educated the press about the proud history of the women's movement.

Further, the Project has been recognized for outstanding contributions to women and children and their education by the National Education Association; for diversity in education by the National Association For Multicultural Education; and for scholarship, service, and advocacy by the Center for Women's Policy Studies.

As I pay tribute to women's history month, I am truly grateful to all the devoted women at the National Women's History Project for their continued commitment and for making an indelible mark on our country.

PRESIDENTIAL DECISION-MAKING RELATED TO KOSOVO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the issue of presidential decision-making related to Kosovo.

Sometimes the challenge of leadership is to recognize that restraint at the outset is a better policy than entanglement at the end.

The Balkans are a caldron of conflict based on a history of internecine violence of which we on this side of the Atlantic have little understanding or capacity to ameliorate.

Policy in such a circumstance should be designed to avoid being caught up in destructive dissensions which are beyond our ken and beyond our control.

There may be a humanitarian case for intervening on the ground in Kosovo as part of a small NATO peacekeeping operation. But this case disintegrates if we unleash air power against one of the sides. In the wake of air strikes, we will be barred forever from a claim to the kind of neutral status required of a peacekeeping participant. More importantly, it is strategic folly to assume civil wars can be calmed by unleashing violence from 30,000 feet.

Teddy Roosevelt once admonished "to speak softly but carry a big stick." At risk to the public interest, this President has taken a different tack. He has raised the rhetoric, threatening one side that air strikes will occur if it does not capitulate, and allowed a war criminal, Slobadan Milosovic, to force his hand.

Now, in part because White House threats are either not being taken seriously or are viewed as potentially counterproductive, Milosovic has put the President in a position of advocating air strikes in order to keep his word, even though their effect may be more anarchistic than constraint.

The world will little note nor long remember what most Presidents say most of the time. But people from every corner of the earth are taking stock of what appears to be a too-ready trigger hand on cruise missiles and air power.

A question worth pondering is whether use of such power in East Africa and

Afghanistan, for instance, precipitates or diminishes efforts by destabilizing powers to build weapons of mass destruction and missile delivery systems for themselves.

Meanwhile, the case for unleashing a military strike in order to make a meaningful threat meaningful should be reconsidered.

It is time to disengage pride and re-view circumstance. It is time to stop being a bully in the use of the bully pulpit.

WE CANNOT AFFORD TO PRIVATIZE MEDICARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, the Medicare Commission fortunately has voted down a Medicare reform proposal that would have privatized one of the best government programs in American history.

The Commission's charge was to come up with a scheme for putting Medicare on a solid financial footing and improving its value to seniors. Instead, they came up with a scheme to end Medicare as we know it. While the Commission's time may have run out, it is not, unfortunately, the end of the story. Plans are being made to introduce legislation based on the plan, they call it premium support, that the Commission just rejected.

Under this proposal, Medicare would no longer pay directly for health care services. Instead, it would provide each senior with a voucher good for part of the premium for private coverage. Medicare beneficiaries could use this voucher to buy into the fee-for-service plan sponsored by the Federal Government or to join a private plan.

To encourage consumer price sensitivity, the voucher would track to the lowest cost private plan; ostensibly, seniors would shop for the plan that best suits their needs, paying extra for higher quality care. But the proposal would abandon the principle of egalitarianism that has made Medicare one of our Nation's best government programs.

Today the Medicare program is income-blind. All seniors have access to the same level of care. The premium support proposal, however, would be structured to provide comprehensiveness, access, and quality only to those who could afford them.

The idea that vouchers would empower seniors to choose a health plan that best suits their needs is simply a myth. The reality is that seniors will be forced to accept whatever plan they can afford.

The Medicare Commission was charged with ensuring Medicare's long-term solvency. This proposal will simply not do that.

Bruise Vladeck, a former administrator of the Medicare program and a commission member, doubted the com-

mission plan would save the Federal Government even one dime. The same proposal under another name will not do it either.

The privatization of Medicare is, of course, nothing new. Medicare beneficiaries have been able to enroll in private managed care plans for some time now, and their experience does not bode well for a full-fledged privatization effort. They are already calling for higher government payments, they are dropping out of unprofitable markets, and they are cutting back on patient benefits.

Managed care plans are profit-driven, and they do not tough it out when those profits are unrealized. We learned this the hard way last year when 96 Medicare HMOs deserted more than 400,000 Medicare beneficiaries because their customers simply did not meet the HMO profit objectives.

Before Medicare was launched in 1965, more than half this Nation's seniors were uninsured. Private insurance was then the only option for senior citizens. Insurers did not want seniors to join their plans because they knew the elderly would use their coverage. The private insurance market has changed considerably since then, but it still avoids high-risk enrollees and, whenever possible, dodges the bill for high-cost medical services.

The purpose of public medical systems is to provide the best health care possible to help people, especially children and the elderly, so that they can live longer, healthier lives.

□ 2115

The purpose of privatized medical systems is to maximize profit through private insurance companies, denying benefits and instituting physician and other provider incentives to withhold care.

The problem is the expectation that private insurers can serve two masters: the bottom line and the common good. There are 43 million uninsured Americans. If the private health insurance industry cannot figure out how to cover these people, most of whom are middle-income workers and children, how will they treat high-cost seniors?

If we privatize Medicare, we are telling Americans that not all senior citizens deserve the same level of care. We are betting on a private insurance system that puts its own interest ahead of health care quality and a balanced Federal budget. As the focus of Medicare reform shifts to Congress, we must question our priorities.

The answer is clear: Medicare is a national priority and must be kept the excellent public program that it has been for 3 decades. Thirty-six million Americans depend on Medicare every day, and it has helped our Nation lead the world in life expectancy for people 80 years and older.

The Medicare Commission wisely disbanded without delivering a final product. It is time now that we go back to the drawing board and construct a plan